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Bihar CM Nitish Kumar elected JD(U) chief unopposed for a straight fifth term amid expected transition in state govt where he is set to make way for a new face, likely from BJP, as he marks his 1st entry to Rajya Sabha

AIADMK election manifesto promises free refrigerators for all rice ration card holders, ₹10k to each family, free bus travel for men, ₹2k monthly cash assistance for women and a complete waiver of edu loans, P 7

A year after international students got emails from US agencies, **a district court allows a lawsuit challenging mass revocation of student visas** & termination of SEVIS records to move forward, P 16

"I'm happy now because it's truly behind me. It's all gone": **French striker Kylian Mbappe says the knee injury that kept him sidelined for almost two months is "behind him"** and there had never been a concern he would miss this year's World Cup

Lok Sabha passes transgender bill by voice vote

Lok Sabha has passed the transgender persons (protection of rights) amendment bill 2026 by a voice vote. Govt said that the changes were aimed at ensuring the protection and benefits reach genuine transgender persons. The opposition slammed the govt for taking away the right to self-determination of gender identity. P 6

AI Dreamliner diverts to Saudi over 'tech issues'

An Air India Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner en route to London from Bengaluru had to be diverted to Jeddah Monday after the crew encountered a series of unexplained warnings across different aircraft systems, sources said. Flight AI-133, operated by the 13-year-old aircraft registered as VT-ANI, had been flying for over six hours when the pilots decided to divert it.

University can't curb students' views: HC

A university cannot restrict freedom of speech and expression merely because the students' views do not align with its ideology, Delhi HC said, setting aside the suspension of a student of Ambedkar University. P 6

India's 3rd satellite launch centre in Guj?

After Sriharikota and the upcoming launch port in TN, India's third satellite launch centre is likely to come up in Gujarat. A site has been identified near Gir Somnath, the state science and tech minister said. P 6

Trump calls PM to 'keep him in loop', Modi does Strait talk

1st Conversation Between The Two Since War Began

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New Delhi: US President Donald Trump spoke to PM Modi on Tuesday about the West Asia situation, including the need to secure the Strait of Hormuz, which remains under an Iranian blockade. In their first call since the war began, Modi reiterated India's support for de-escalation and restoration of peace at the earliest. Trump dialled Modi a day after he announced postponement of military strikes on Iranian power plants for five days, raising hopes of an early cessation of hostilities.

The news of the call was broken on a social media platform by US ambassador Sergio Gor, who also told a news channel that Trump wants to keep PM Modi "in the loop".

While Iran has allowed several Indian ships to sail through the Strait in the past two weeks, many Indian vessels remain stuck. Foreign minister S Jaishankar met Iran ambassador Mohammad Fathali Tuesday and shared India's concerns about the situation, while thanking Iran for its support to Indians in the country.

Modi also spoke to Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake and discussed the evolving situation in West Asia, with particular focus, as he said, on disruptions affecting global energy security.

▶ Hegseth said, 'Let's do it': Trump on war decision, P 16

▶ Safe passage of ships, P 9

JAISHANKAR SPEAKS TO IRAN ENVOY ON SHIP TRANSIT

- Saudi crown prince **MbS has been pushing Trump to continue war**, arguing it's a 'historic opportunity' to remake West Asia, according to people briefed by US officials, NYT reports
- Iran appoints hardline IRGC veteran **Mohammad Bagher Zolghadr** as top national security leader, **replacing Ali Larijani**
- 'Let's do it': Trump says secretary of war **Pete Hegseth was first to suggest attacking Iran**
- Pakistan PM **Shehbaz Sharif says he's willing to host 'meaningful and conclusive'** talks between US and Iran on ending war
- Since war began, **gold in local mkt has fallen 12%** to about ₹1.4L/10g while silver is down 14% to ₹2.3L/kg
- Bahrain proposes UNSC authorise nations to **use 'all necessary means' to protect shipping** around Strait

Photo: AFP

Remnants of an Iranian missile that landed in an Israeli-occupied West Bank village

Talks likely in Pak, Vance may lead US side: Report

US Vice-President **J D Vance** is being put forward as a probable chief negotiator from the US side if talks with Iran go ahead, The Guardian quoted Pakistani sources as saying on Tuesday.

Iranian sources have said they would refuse to sit down with Trump's Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff, or his son-in-law Jared Kushner, who led the nuclear negotiations with Iran before the war, said the report. It also mentioned Pakistani officials as saying the US and Iran could meet for negotiations in Islamabad as early as this week.

Iran's parliamentary speaker, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, is being touted as the person most likely to lead talks from the Iranian side. However, Ghalibaf has so far dismissed reports of talks between the two sides as "fake news".

Donald Trump has spoken with Pakistan army chief Asim Munir about the conflict, people familiar with the matter said. PM Shehbaz Sharif said in a post on Tuesday Pakistan would be "honoured" to mediate the talks — a post that Trump later shared on his account without saying whether he would accept the offer. TNN & AGENCIES

7 groups to assess implications: Modi

PM Narendra Modi on Tuesday announced the formation of seven empowered groups to assess implications of the Gulf conflict on energy supplies, essential commodities, supply chains, and chart a strategy to cushion its impact on Indian economy. TNN

PM Modi warns of prolonged disruption due to West Asia conflict

New Delhi: Amid continuing uncertainty over the likely course of the war in West Asia, PM Modi Tuesday warned of prolonged disruption, saying its adverse effects could last for a long time.

Speaking in Rajya Sabha a day after US President Trump said negotiations have started with Iran, Modi cautioned that the conflict could continue leading to an energy crisis and serious consequences for the global economy. "In the coming times, this crisis will be a major test for our country, and the cooperation of states will be crucial," he told the upper House, his tone appearing to share the widespread scepticism about the prospects of cessation of hostilities anytime soon. TNN

▶ Major test for India, P 9

Harish Rana, first to be allowed passive euthanasia in India, dies

Death In 'Natural Course' Within 13 Days Of SC Order

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New Delhi: Harish Rana, the first patient in India to be permitted passive euthanasia under a Supreme Court order, passed away on Tuesday after spending 13 years in a vegetative state. The end came at 4.10pm at AIIMS, with family members by his side, marking the culmination of a legal battle over the right to die with dignity.

Rana, 31, had been under the care of a specialised palliative team at the institution since March 14. Doctors said his condition began deteriorating Tuesday morning and the end was medically expected. His death followed withdrawal of life-sustaining support — primarily artificial hydration and feeding — in line with the Supreme Court's directive.

The family has donated his corneas and heart valves.

"His passing followed a natural course. We provided only comfort care, without any active medical intervention. There was no artificial hydration or feeding, and no attempt was made to revive him through medication or CPR," doctors said, adding that he remained comfortable over the last 10 days with no visible distress. "He passed away peacefully." His family members drew comfort from seeing him at ease, the medical team said.

Media cell in-charge Prof Rima Dada said Rana was admitted to the palliative oncology unit (IRCH), led by Dr (Prof) Seema Mishra, HoD, onco-anaesthesia.

On March 11, SC allowed Rana to exercise his "right to die with dignity", noting there had been no improvement in his condition for 13 years and that the obligation to continue treatment does not hold when there is no hope of recovery. He was shifted from his Ghaziabad home to AIIMS for palliative care three days later.

▶ Cremation today, P 8

13-YEAR ORDEAL

- **Harish Rana, a final year BTech student, suffered severe brain injury in 2013** after falling off the fourth floor of his PG accommodation
- Spent 13 years in vegetative state, **cared for by his parents** at their home
- **On March 11, SC allowed passive euthanasia** after his parents asked that he be allowed to die with dignity

SC: Trials in UAPA cases must be completed in 1 yr

New Delhi: Supreme Court on Tuesday said trials in UAPA cases investigated by National Investigation Agency (NIA) must be concluded within one year by additional exclusive special courts to allay misgivings about long pendency and consequent denial of bail for years, **reports Dhananjay Mahapatra**. A bench of CJI Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi said the Centre and states must take steps to depute a dedicated public prosecutor for these special courts to expedite pending trials.

▶ K'taka pending cases, P 10

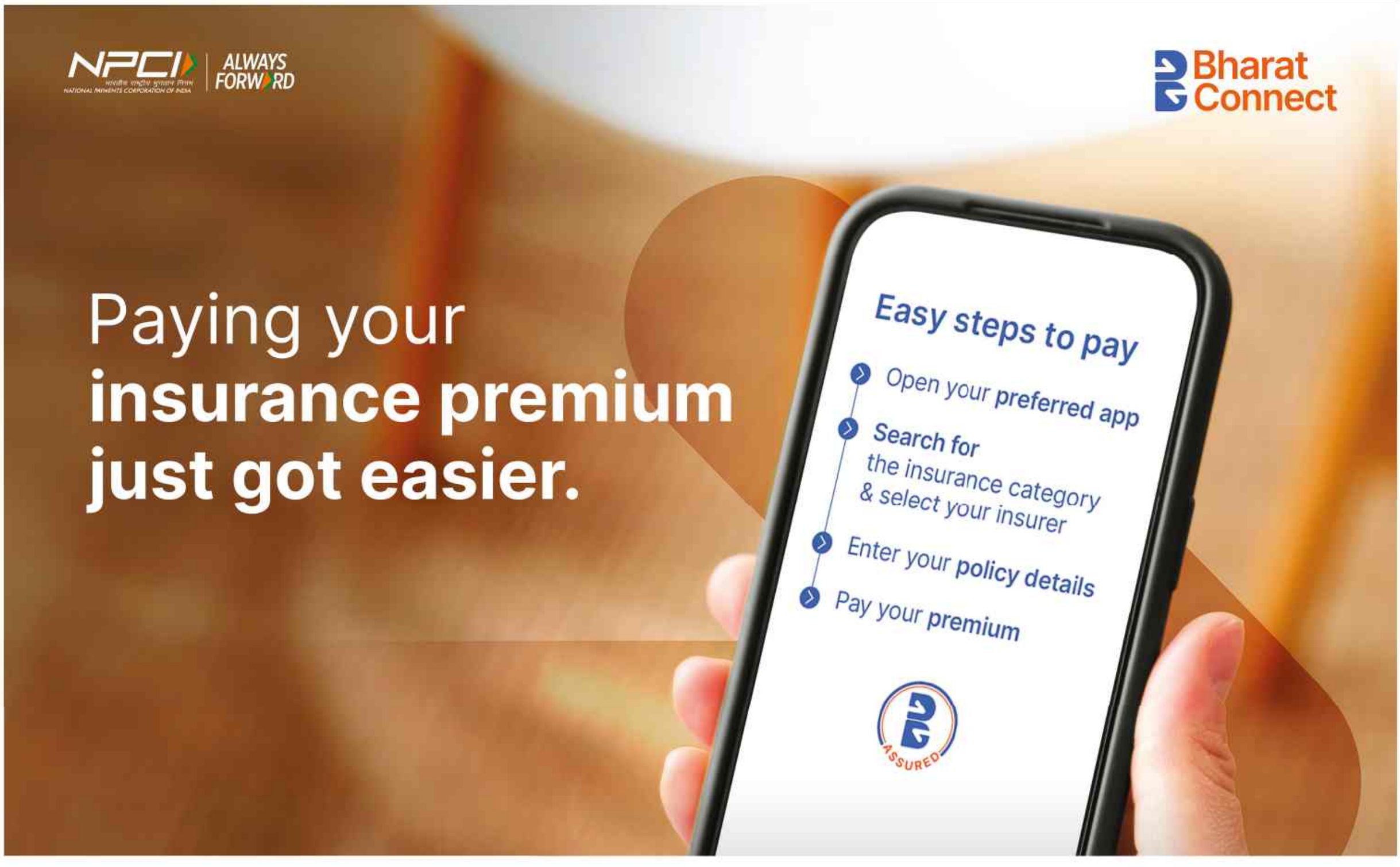
IN THE COURTS

- **Supreme Court rules that a Dalit loses his/her SC status after converting to another religion** other than Buddhism and Sikhism, and can't invoke SC/ST Act | P 9
- **Delhi high court sets aside 24-year jail term awarded to Geeta Arora alias Sonu Punjaban** for allegedly trafficking a 12-year-old and acquits her of all charges
- Delhi high court **refuses to quash CBI case** in alleged **land-for-railway-jobs scam involving Lalu** and his family

Women in SSC entitled to full pension: SC

In a move to favour hundreds of women officers under the short service commission, the Supreme Court on Tuesday said arbitrariness in the assessment of their annual confidential reports, written at a time they were ineligible for permanent commission (PC), resulted in unfair denial of PC and ordered the armed forces to pay full pension to them, **reports Dhananjay Mahapatra**.

Invoking Article 142 of the Constitution, SC said the women officers concerned "shall be entitled to pension and all consequential benefits". P 10



THE INVISIBLE GAP

Bengaluru's Revised Electoral Rolls Show Women Nearly At Parity With Men At The City Level. But A Ward-by-Ward Reading Tells A Different Story: One Where Men Outnumber Women In Nearly 9 of 10 Wards

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GBA POLLS

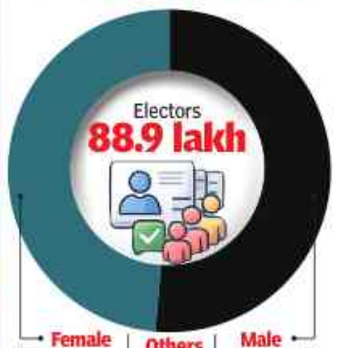
The numbers, at first glance, look almost reassuring. Bengaluru's revised electoral rolls for 2026, released on March 9, show more than 88.9 lakh electors across the city's five corporation limits. Of these, nearly 45.7 lakh are men and 43.2 lakh women.

That is a gap of roughly 2.5 lakh electors, or just 2.8 percentage points (51.4% men, 48.6% women) — a figure close enough to parity to invite optimism about the state of female elector registration in one of India's largest cities. But aggregated figures are a blunt instrument. They compress enormous variation — across neighbourhoods, across communities, across decades of urban change — into a single, deceptively comfortable ratio.

When Bengaluru's elector data is disaggregated to the ward level, a strikingly different picture emerges. Of 369 wards across the city, men outnumber women electors in 324, or 87.8%. Women hold a majority in 45 wards — just one in eight. This is not a marginal imbalance. It is a structural pattern that repeats, with varying intensity, across every corporation of the city.

Photo for representation

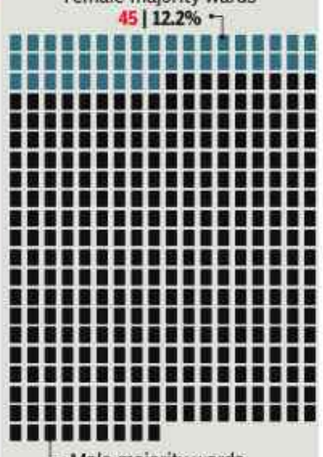
WHO VOTES IN BENGALURU?



Female	Others	Male
43.2 lakh	1,635	45.7 lakh
48.6%		51.4%

TOTAL WARDS: 369

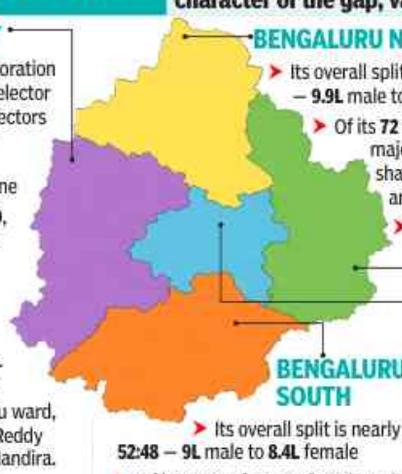
Female-majority wards
45 | 12.2%



Male-majority wards
324 | 87.8%

5 CORPORATIONS, 1 CLEAR PATTERN

Breaking the data down by corporation zone reveals that male dominance of ward-level elector rolls is not confined to any one part of the city. It is, in fact, a city-wide phenomenon — though the degree, and the character of the gap, varies meaningfully between zones



BENGALURU WEST

- The city's largest corporation by both ward count and elector base: **112** wards, **27.3L** electors and a raw gender gap of **66,835** — the largest in absolute terms of any zone
- Its overall split is **51:49**, and only **10 of 112 wards** show female majorities — a share of **8.9%**
- Lakshmi Devi Nagar, Malleswaram, Rajamahal, Kodandarampura, Subramanyanagar, Gayathri Nagar, Kuvempu ward, Dayanand Nagar, Bandi Reddy Circle ward, and Rama Mandira. These are mostly settled, historically dense areas of northwest Bengaluru where women's registration is stronger
- West also contains some of the most notable statistical outliers. **Ward 90**, Krishnadevaraya, registers 132 electors in 'Others' category — the highest in the entire GBA dataset, a figure that deserves closer demographic attention

BENGALURU NORTH

- Its overall split is also nearly **51:49** — **9.9L** male to **9.6L** female
- Of its **72 wards, 17** are female majorities — a **23.6%** share, the highest of any corporation
- Nearly **1 in 4 wards** leans female. Many of these — Kalyan Nagar, HRBR Layout, Jaya Chamarajendra Nagar, Sagayapuram, Doddanna Nagar — are mid-density residential areas with relatively stable populations
- Sagayapuram is the single ward in the entire city with the largest female surplus in absolute terms: women outnumber men by **1,103 — 12,501 to 11,398**

BENGALURU SOUTH

- Its overall split is nearly **52:48 — 9L** male to **8.4L** female
- Of its **72 wards, 7** are female majorities — only a **9.7%** share
- The city's most extreme single-ward gender gap is also found in this part of the city: in **Subramanyapura,** which has the largest total electorate in the entire dataset at **54,026** electors, records **27,895** male electors and **26,130** female — a surplus of **1,765.** The size of that ward's electorate means that this single gap alone has an outsized effect on the citywide aggregate

BENGALURU CENTRAL

- Its overall split — **7.2L** male to **6.9L** — works out to roughly **51:49**
- Of its **63 wards, 10** are female majorities — a share of **15.9%,** the second highest in the the tech capital
- Jayamahal, Ambedkar Nagar, Swatantra Palya, and Rayapuram are among the wards where women's registration outpaces men's

BENGALURU EAST

- The most striking outlier in the electoral dataset. Covering the technology employment corridor from KR Pura through Whitefield, Marathahalli, Varthur and Bellandur, Bengaluru East records an overall split of **53:47** — the widest city-level gender gap of any zone
- More telling still: Of its **50 wards, only 1** has female majority (Ramamurthynagar) and by a margin of just **17** voters — **11,153** female to **11,136** male
- That figure is the starkest finding in the entire electoral roll. It points to a dynamic that is almost certainly connected to the nature of employment in the East: male-dominated tech and construction workforces, migrant workers who register at their city residence while female family members may remain registered in home districts, and newer residential colonies that have not yet achieved the community density needed for comprehensive household enrolment
- Whitefield shows a significant gap of **1,623 — 15,588** male electors to **13,965** female

Ready to roar: City puts best foot forward for IPL season

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: With Indian Premier League (IPL) matches scheduled from March 28 (Saturday) at M Chinnaswamy Stadium, police have unveiled a series of crowd management and safety measures aimed at ensuring a smooth and hassle-free experience for spectators.

The measures have been taken in the backdrop of the 11 deaths in a stampede in front of the stadium on June 4 last year during the title celebrations of Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB).

In a major boost to public transport, Metro travel and vehicle parking have been integrated into the match ticket itself. As part of an agreement between Karnataka State Cricket Association, RCB and Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd, spectators can travel free (both to and from the stadium) on the Metro using their match tickets.

Officials clarified that spectators can access the stadium from both Cubbon Park Metro station and MG Road station. BMRCL has also agreed to run additional services, with trains available every three minutes to handle the rush on match days.

Joint commissioner of police (west) C Vamsi Krishna said the gates will open four hours before match time, and spectators are advised to arrive early. Entry has been streamlined, with multiple gates open and each at least nine metres wide. In total, 28 entry points have been created to manage the crowd flow efficiently. The majority of the crowd will be allowed through E1 to E5 gates on Cubbon Road for stands including A, B, P1, P1 Annexe, P3, D Corporate and Executive areas. Gates E17, E18, and E19 lead to C, E, F, and H upper stands. Only pedestrians will be allowed through the link road. To reduce congestion, authorities have restricted access on Queens Road, allowing only players and P2, P Corporate, and P Terrace pass holders through gates E8 and E10.

DON'T PARK HERE

- Both sides of Queens Road, from Balekundri Circle to Queens Circle, CTO Junction (Jn), MG Road, Anil Kumble Circle
- Link Road (MG Road to Cubbon Road), Raj Bhavan Road, T Chowdaiah Road, Race Course Road and Central Street
- On Cubbon Road, from Kamaraj Road Jn to Dickenson Road Jn (except for BMTC buses)
- St Mark's Road, Museum Road, Kasturba Road, Lavelle Road and Vittal Mallya Road will see strict enforcement

AI

PARK HERE

- St Joseph's Indian High School ground, St Joseph's Boys High School ground, Freedom Park, MLCP parking facilities, Garuda Mall, first floor of Shivajinagar BMTC bus stand, UB City
- Designated parking zones operational from 11am to 9pm

500 CCTV cams & more

Security has been significantly ramped up, with around 500 CCTV cameras with real-time monitoring and AI-based crowd analytics set up around the stadium. AI-powered systems will monitor crowd density, while multiple agencies including Garuda Force, SDRF, civil police, traffic police, and home guards will be deployed.

Authorities have already conducted two mock drills, with another scheduled prior to match day.

Nandini partners with RCB

Nandini, the flagship brand of Karnataka Milk Federation, has partnered with RCB as the official dairy partner for IPL. It said the partnership brings together two top Karnataka-based brands with strong public connect. In a post on X, the CM said: "The synergy between Nandini's trusted legacy and RCB's sporting excellence will be a key highlight of this IPL season."

Death certificate issued to living person

Bengaluru: The high court has pulled up the Greater Bengaluru Authority, formerly BBMP, for issuing a death certificate in the name of a living person, and then steadfastly refusing to rectify the mistake.

Justice Sachin Shankar Magadum, who was hearing a petition filed by RT Nagar resident M Basha, directed civic authorities to ensure that a cancellation endorsement of the death certificate is issued by Wednesday.

In oral remarks, the judge also said the officers responsible have to be hauled up for

HC PULLS UP GBA

this. The petitioner's Aadhaar card was submitted to a cancer hospital where his cousin, Shamsuddin, was undergoing treatment.

However, after the cousin died, the authorities issued a death certificate in the name of the petitioner, dated April 23, 2025. This had a cascading effect, including the fear of deactivation of the Aadhaar card of the petitioner, and there was also a threat of disruption to his banking activities. Despite repeated representations/requests with sufficient proof, no remedial action was taken, according to the petitioner's counsel, Ashwini Obulesh.

Challenging the action of the civic body, the petitioner claimed that despite the Registration of Births and Deaths Act providing for corrective action in such instances, no remedial action was taken, thereby seriously affecting his fundamental rights. TNN

Professional turns tragedy into platform for disabled artists

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Bengaluru: For Sravani Ramachandran, art did not begin as a passion — it began as a necessity. Confined to a wheelchair after a life-altering accident 15 years ago, the Infosys employee turned to sketching just to fill two difficult hours each day. Years later, those quiet moments have grown into a platform that uplifts dozens of artists across India.

Sravani, 40, has been instrumental in building Pragathi, a Bengaluru-based non-profit focused on promoting artworks created by persons with disabilities. The initiative seeks to celebrate creativity, promote financial independence for artists and build greater awareness about inclusion through art.

Born and raised in Bengaluru, Sravani comes from a typical middle-class family that valued education and independence. Armed with a BCom degree and an MBA, she was on the verge of launching a stable corporate career when the accident struck, leaving her with spinal cord injuries.

Multiple surgeries and a rare infection made recovery a long and painful ordeal. Even sitting upright for a few hours was initially impossible. But it was during this phase that art quietly entered her life. "I started sketching just to distract myself from the pain," she says. "I could sit for two hours in a wheelchair every day, and I wanted to make that time count, instead of just watching TV."

One of the artworks of Sravani (inset)

Expo from April 4

Pragathi will organise the two-day Art from the Heart exhibition at Devaraj Urs Gallery, Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath, from April 4. This will be the fourth exhibition by Pragathi, and will showcase works of 40 artists. Visitors will be able to interact directly with the artists & purchase their works.

What began as a coping mechanism soon became a passion. From simple sketches, Sravani moved on to experimenting with oil pastels, stippling, and other media. Over time, her work evolved — not just in technique, but in meaning. "Art brought some colour back into my life," she says.

Her journey took a decisive turn when she began showcasing her work at Bengaluru's well-known art exhibition, Chitra Santhe. There, she encountered artists with disabilities — individuals with autism, Down syndrome, and hearing impairments — who, like her, were using art as a powerful form of expression. What struck her deeply was the lack of platforms available to such artists. "I was overwhelmed by the talent of the artists. There is a blind artist. How can you paint when you cannot even see colours? I met incredible talent, but there were very few chances for them to showcase their work."

Determined to change that, Sravani, along with her sister and friends, started Pragathi, an initiative aimed at creating a space for artists with disabilities. This eventually evolved into Art from the Heart, an annual exhibition that celebrates inclusive art.

Additionally, Pragathi has begun collaborating with public venues such as shopping malls and cultural spaces to help artists reach broader audiences. Alongside her work in the corporate sector, Sravani continues to create art, often dedicating weekends to long hours of painting. Her art has also found commercial success. Through calendars featuring her themed artwork, she has built a steady audience, with the windows and door series selling nearly 1,000 copies. But beyond numbers, it is the impact that matters most.

Observation tower to come up at zoo

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Bannerghatta Biological Park (BBP) is set to get an observation tower within the zoo premises, aimed at enhancing visitor experience and promoting conservation awareness.

The project will be developed in partnership with Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies, which will fund the Rs 5-crore project through a grant. A memorandum of understanding was signed on March 24 between Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies and BBP, which is a unit under the Zoo Authority of Karnataka.

The proposed 25-metre-high tower will offer panoramic views of Bannerghatta National Park and the Bengaluru skyline. It has been designed to accommodate 50-70 visitors at a time. The structure will also incorporate sustainable features such as solar energy systems and rainwater harvesting.

BBP, which attracts over 2.2 million visitors annually, plays a key role in wildlife rescue, conservation and public education.

BBP executive director AV Surya Sen said: "The proposed observation tower will not only enhance visitor experience through immersive, nature-based learning, but will also stand as a symbol of our dedication to environmentally responsible infrastructure," he said.

₹5cr MOVE: Artist's impression of the proposed 25-metre-high tower at Bannerghatta zoo

Govt considers memorial demand by vet's family

The family of young veterinarian Dr Samiksha Reddy, who died after a hippopotamus attack at Shivamogga zoo, has urged the govt to set up a memorial in her name either at BBP or any other zoo in Karnataka — a request the state has agreed to consider. Forest minister Eshwar Khandre told the assembly Tuesday the govt initially offered Rs 30 lakh as compensation, but the family declined it and instead sought a lasting tribute.

Are you scrolling past a real connection?
Almost 46% people experience phubbing, which is when your significant other ignores you in favour of their phone. In the long run, this can cause lower relationship satisfaction and higher rates of depression.
In response to this important concern, The Times of India has partnered with leading institutions like IIT Delhi, NIMHANS, and CENABH for an initiative that will help provide credible, research-driven insights to foster a healthy digital balance in your life.
Scan the QR to take a scientific psychological assessment of your digital habits.
Would you like to register for a digital health workshop at your housing society? Email us at times.interact@timesofindia.com
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RWA moves HC against school in Rajajinagar; notices issued

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: The high court Tuesday ordered issuance of notice to the govt, police, and Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) in response to a PIL plea over the functioning of a school in a residential area of Rajajinagar.

A division bench of Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice CM Poonacha posted the petition, filed by Rajajinagar 5th Block Residents' Welfare Association, to July 2 for further consideration.

The petitioners urged the court to issue directions to consider their requests/representations vis-a-vis the problems they have faced because of the conduct of National Public School. They claimed the school uses a public address system throughout the day, which disturbs locals, especially those who work from home.

The petitioners also accused the school of not giving priority in admissions to children residing in the locality, which is a requirement. Finally, the petitioner RWA claimed the school parks its buses outside the campus, leading to congestion.

PRR REBOOTED Caught Between Land Acquisition Policy & Compensation Protests, Corridor Key To Easing Traffic On Arterial Roads

2029 DEADLINE revives stalled project

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Bengaluru: The long-delayed Peripheral Ring Road (PRR), now rebranded Bengaluru Business Corridor (BBC), has been given a fresh push, with the state govt setting 2029 as its new completion deadline.

The 73-km corridor, which will connect Tumakuru Road to Hosur Road via Ballari Road and Old Madras Road, is being positioned as a key infrastructure project to ease congestion on Bengaluru's arterial roads. The Rs 27,000-crore project will be financed through a loan from the Housing and Urban Development Corporation.

The govt's renewed push comes amid mounting pressure to address the city's worsening traffic crisis and repeated questions over why the project has remained stuck since its notification in 2007. "It is a project that got caught between policy and protest; while policy pertained to land acquisition challenges, protest was by landowners alleging the compensation was not adequate," said a former minister.

The project started chugging forward only after former IAS officer LK Atheeq took over as chairman of the project a few months ago.

Around 2,560 acres are required for the corridor, but compensation disputes have triggered sustained opposition from farmers and landowners. The conflict largely stems from Bangalore Development Authority choosing to acquire land under its own Act instead of the more recent 2013 land acquisition law titled 'Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition and Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act', which reportedly offers higher compensation and rehabilitation benefits.

Farmer groups argue that the compensation being offered, based on guidance values frozen since 2016, is far below market rates. "We will not get even a fraction of the actual value of our land," said a landowner from Kodathi, pointing to stark disparities between official compensation and prevailing market prices.

Meanwhile, the project alignment also underwent changes, and PRR obtained the environmental clearance only in 2023. In Oct 2025, the cabinet cleared the proposal for the business corridor in which the previous design of 100-metre width was changed to 65 metres. The remaining 35-metre width along the corridor was decided to be used for compensating land losers and to carve out commercial plots.

Subsequently, the govt came up with five compensation options for land losers: Ex-gratia cash compensation, Transferable Development Rights (TDR), grant of Floor Area Ratio (FAR), commercial sites along the corridor, residential sites in Shivaram Karanth Layout or residential layouts developed near the corridor.

While BDA has been posting photographs with some farmers accepting the negotiated compensation rate, the PRR Farmers and Landowners Association has rejected all the five options. Association's president B Srinivasa, who owns land in Mavallipura, said the options of TDR and FAR are beneficial only for real estate developers and not farmers. "The guidance values in 74 villages have not been revised since 2016 at the behest of BDA. For Shivaram Karanth Layout, BDA offered Rs 4.7 crore per acre, but only Rs 3.3 crore for PRR," he said, criticising BDA's cash compensation formula.

Authorities are now attempting a phased rollout, beginning with a 23-km stretch between Madavara and Yelahanka (Package-1). Officials say about 50% of land for this stretch has been acquired. "We will proceed package-wise. Each stretch can function independently," said BBC chairman LK Atheeq. To move forward with tenders, at least 80% of land must be secured — something the agency is yet to achieve.

However, deputy chief minister DK Shivakumar seems confident. He announced in the ongoing legislature session that the project would be completed at any cost whatever the challenges are.

ON TRACK NOW? Around 2,560 acres are needed for the 73-km corridor to be developed at Rs 27,000 crore

HURDLES FOR TWO DECADES

Land acquisition dispute: Farmers want compensation under the 2013 law; BDA is using its own Act

Compensation gap: Guidance values frozen since 2016 reduced payout calculations

Legal challenges: Courts are hearing petitions on whether project has lapsed

Alignment changes: Revised routes brought new land parcels into acquisition

Scale of the project: Acquiring over 2,500 acres in a rapidly urbanising region remains a massive challenge

WHY IT MATTERS FOR TECH CAPITAL?

Once done, the corridor is expected to

- Divert heavy traffic away from congested Outer Ring Road
- Improve airport and inter-city connectivity
- Unlock new urban and commercial zones along periphery

LINKING PLACES (PRR -1)

Length: 73 km

Route: Tumakuru Road → Ballari Road → Old Madras Road → Hosur Road

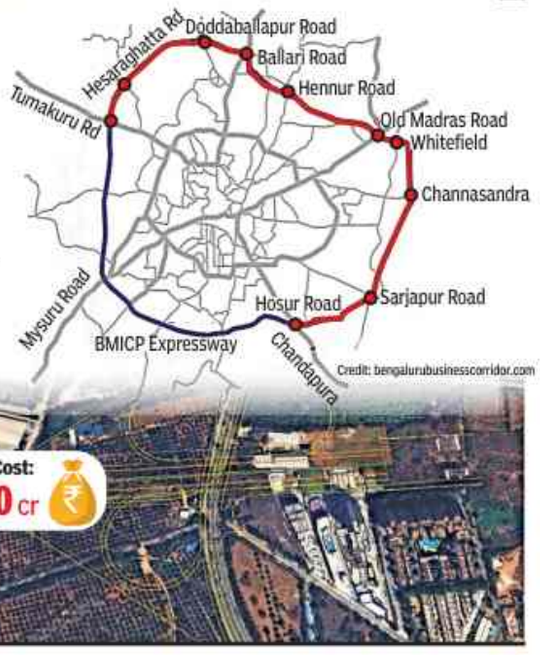
Funding: Loan from HUDCO

Land required: 2,500+ acres

Current status: Land acquisition under way

New deadline: 2029

Trees to be felled 33,000



Estimated Cost: ₹27,000 cr

Not a drift, just a brake skid: Rai counters police version

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: The Lamborghini "drifting" stunt case near Anil Kumble Circle has taken a dramatic turn, with counsel of **Ricky Rai**, son of former underworld don Muthappa Rai, claiming that the incident was not a stunt but a brake-related skid.

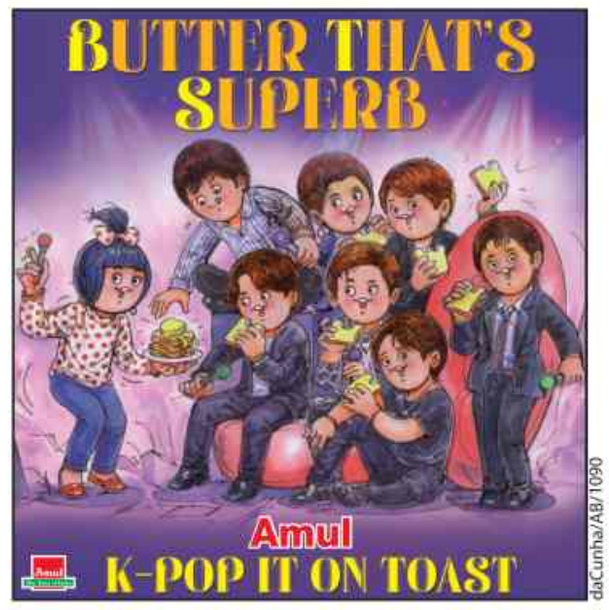
Rai appeared before Cubbon Park traffic police Monday evening after securing anticipatory bail and recorded his statement, insisting he was not driving the car when the alleged drifting occurred early Saturday on MG Road.

His counsel, G Narayanswamy, told the media that the incident was "misinterpreted as a drifting stunt." Rai's driver was behind the wheel at the time. "There was no nuisance between 2am and 3am, and traffic would have been minimal. The car was at a service centre, and the driver took it out. Ricky Rai was in the car, but he was not driving," he claimed. Narayanswamy said the car skidded when the driver applied brakes on a recently repaired road allegedly covered with mud. "The driver managed to control the vehicle and continued driving. His skill should be appreciated," he said.

He alleged that Rai was being unfairly targeted. "In similar cases of drifting or wheeling, police usually impose spot fines and release vehicles. Why was an FIR registered here? This is at best a Rs 1,000-fine case," he argued, adding that Rai, who returned from Russia just a day before the incident, was questioned for nearly three hours.

Meanwhile, traffic police released before-and-after visuals of the car on social media, blurring Rai's face. A senior officer confirmed that the driver has admitted to driving, and investigation is on.

LAMBORGHINI CASE



Woman killed by daughter, spouse and grandson over alms money

Bengaluru: A 68-year-old woman was killed by her daughter, son-in-law and her grandson following a dispute over money in Neelasandra Sunday.

The deceased, Shakira, was a resident of RK Garden, Neelasandra. She was found dead with multiple injuries on her head, forehead and legs.

Ashok Nagar police arrested the accused — Mohammed Hussain alias Setuba, 22, his mother Reshma Banu and his father Fayaz Ahmed.

Shakira used to beg for alms near Masjid-E-Umar Farooq in Neelasandra. On March 21, she had collected a few thousand rupees from devotees visiting the masjid during Ramzan. Around midnight the following day, her son-in-law Fayaz, daughter Reshma and grandson Hussain allegedly went to her house and demanded money. When she refused, an argument broke out, which escalated into an assault. Hussain allegedly struck Shakira on the head with a brick. The trio fled the scene after the incident.

Hoysala police tracked down and arrested them in Neelasandra in two hours. TNN

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Brochure download & Registration Start Date & Time	Registration End Date & Time	Last Date of Registration EMD, Processing Fee Deposit	Last Date of Final Submission of Documents	E-Auction Date & Time
28.03.2026 I 3 PM	27.06.2026 I 5 PM	30.06.2026 I 5 PM	04.07.2026 I 5 PM	To be notified separately

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7 months pregnant, killed by dad: Case that drove honour crime law

Basavaraj.Kattimani
@timesofindia.com

Hubballi: The murder of 19-year-old Manya Vivekananda Doddamani in Dharwad became the trigger for the govt's decision to pass a dedicated law against honour-based crimes, with both the legislative assembly and council clearing the bill amid rising concern over caste-driven violence.

Manya, who was seven months pregnant, was allegedly killed by her father and relatives on Dec 21 last year, at Inam Veerapur village. Investigators said her inter-caste marriage was the trigger.

Her family had opposed the wedding but despite resistance, Manya, a Lingayat, married Vivekanand Doddamani, from the Scheduled Caste Madiga community in May 2025. The couple had previously sought police protection, and officials had attempted a reconciliation.

"We approached the police when threats increased. They warned her family, but it did not stop," Vivekanand said while welcoming the new law, which is now awaiting assent of the governor.

Recalling their relationship, he said, "We knew each other from school, but became close after we began chatting on social media later. I proposed in Hubballi, and she accepted after a week. We decided to marry despite opposition from her family."

They married in Ulavi on May 5 and registered the union days later. Fearing for

TOI

LIFE SNUFFED OUT: Manya and Vivekananda Doddamani were married in May 2025

their safety, they moved out of Inam Veerapur but returned in Dec last year. "We thought the situation had calmed down," he said.

On the day of the incident, the accused allegedly attempted to ram a tractor into his father. "They first tried to attack my family," Vivekanand said. "I rushed to the spot and called the police en route." He alleged the group then went to his house, assaulted his family members, and attacked Manya. "She was brutally assaulted. She was taken to hospital, but she did not survive," he said.

Police arrested more than 10 accused, including her father, Prakashgouda Patil, while others are absconding. Two police personnel and a panchayat development officer were suspended for dereliction of duty. A court is hearing the case.

Law offers hope

The killing triggered protests across Dharwad and adjoining districts, with Dalit groups and activists demanding a stringent law to address honour killings.

"The govt must ensure all accused are punished severely," Vivekanand said, pointing out that it will send a strong message. "A fast-track court should hear the case to ensure justice is not delayed." He also urged strict enforcement of the new law. "It should protect those who choose inter-caste or inter-faith marriages. No one should face what we went through," he said.

Activists and community organisations, who ran a campaign for the new law, urged the govt to implement it strictly. "It will instil fear in those who target inter-caste couples and give confidence to such marriages," said Shekar Kavalikai of Jagatika Lingayat Mahasabha, adding, "We had sought naming it after Manya, but are happy it has been passed."

Other activists also voiced similar concerns. Basavaraj Sulibhavi, writer and publisher, said, "We demanded this law but it should not remain on paper. Awareness must reach villages."

Gurunath Ullikashi, state president, Samata Sena and Vividha Dalit Sanga Saunstegala Mahamandal, said, "Manya's killing sparked the debate that led to this bill," while Suresh Khanapur, president, Karnataka Dalit Vimochana Samiti, said: "We held protests after her murder. The law should ensure protection for inter-caste couples."

CAG flags ghost works, fund lapses in rollout of scheme

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: An audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India has flagged widespread irregularities in the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in the state, raising questions over the govt's claims of effective delivery.

The report, tabled in the legislature Tuesday, pointed to deficiencies in planning, financial management, execution of works and monitoring from 2019-20 to 2023-24.

TOI

TICKING OFF POINTS: Industries minister MB Patil and law and parliamentary affairs minister HK Patil confer during the session in the legislative council on Tuesday, a day when several bills were passed in the Upper House. The session will continue till Thursday

MGNREGA

The mandated bottom-up approach to prepare labour budgets was not followed, and baseline surveys of job card holders were not conducted, leading to unrealistic projections and variations in employment demand, the report said. Delays in submission of labour budgets and underutilisation of funds also affected implementation. Fund release delays cost the state penal interest of Rs 36.3 crore, while inadmissible expenditure of Rs 32.8 crore was recorded.

Employment generation also fell short of the scheme's mandate. "While the Act guarantees 100 days of wage employment, only 5% of households achieved this benchmark, with most receiving just 1 to 30 days of work," the report said.

Demand for work remained below 48% of issued job cards, and 34,499 applicants were yet to receive job cards as of March 2024. The audit also cited exclusion of vulnerable groups and poor awareness due to weak outreach.

The report flagged irregularities in execution of works. "Fraudulent transactions such as payment for houses already completed, payment to ineligible beneficiaries, payments without undertaking construction and excess payments were noticed. Similarly, fabrication of records and fraudulent payments were noticed under works related to solid waste management sheds, check dams and raising seedlings under social forestry," it said.

Field verification revealed several assets were either non-existent or defunct. In one instance, geo-tagged images showed a waste management shed at Babalad gram panchayat in Kalaburagi district, but no structure was found on site. At Kamalanagar in Aland taluk, records claimed construction of compost pits, dry waste stores, an office room and toilets, but these were not executed. In Yelburga taluk, Koppal district, social forestry work involving raising seedlings existed only on record, with the site found to be a plain stretch of land.

Monitoring and accountability mechanisms were also found lacking. The state employment guarantee council met only once during the audit period, vigilance units were not constituted, and social audits declined sharply with a 57% shortfall in 2023-24. Grievance redressal remained weak, with 59% of complaints pending, the report noted.

Four-hour debate on 'Iva Nammava' bill

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: The legislative council Tuesday passed the Karnataka Freedom of Choice in Marriage and Prevention and Prohibition of Crimes in the Name of Honour and Tradition (Iva Nammava, Iva Nammava) Bill, 2026, following a debate that lasted four hours and 25 minutes, with as many as 23 members participating.

Several BJP members had opposed the bill when it was debated in the assembly last week, but it received unanimous support in the Upper House, with members from both treasury and opposition benches offering suggestions. Law minister HK Patil described the consensus as "rare".

ON THE SAME PAGE: Ministers Santosh Lad and NS Boseraju, also leader of the House, in the council on Tuesday

During the discussion, BJP members raised concerns about what they called the "underbelly" of inter-caste marriages, alleging misuse of reservation benefits. They also called for revisiting the legal marriageable age, arguing that 18 and 21 years are "economically unstable".

Members also suggested counselling mechanisms to prevent hasty marriages. Patil said such changes would require discussion in future sessions as the state is bound by central laws. Chalavadi Narayanswamy, leader of the opposition, urged the govt to take related proposals to the Centre. He also recommended mandatory registration of such marriages and financial and housing support for couples.

Some members noted that existing laws lack specific provisions on honour killings, adding that the state recorded 13 such cases between Jan 2020 and Dec 2023, including nine involving family members.

Congress members echoed similar concerns, referring to judicial observations on caste status. In response, Patil said he "reserved his opinion" on the matter, while acknowledging it as a socio-economic issue.

Muthu P

IMPOSING FIRST IMPRESSION: CM Siddaramaiah, alongside speaker UT Khader and council chairperson Basavaraj Horatti, Tuesday unveiled newly installed wooden doors at the west entrance to Vidhana Soudha. The intricately carved rosewood doors replace iron grill gates and cost the state exchequer Rs 84 lakh, including GST. The doors were crafted by artisans from Karnataka State Forest Industries Corporation Ltd and are adorned with motifs inspired by Mysuru Palace besides featuring Gandabherunda, the state emblem, and Ashoka Pillar

Row over firm's mining dues

Bengaluru: A heated exchange broke out in the council Tuesday over alleged non-payment of mining dues and unauthorised continuation of quarry operations by ACC, a premier cement company, with both governing Congress and opposition BJP members questioning the govt's handling of royalty recovery and permissions.

Raising the issue on behalf of party colleague Arathi Krishna, Congress' K Shivakumar alleged ACC owes substantial dues but is continuing with operations. Krishna, in a written question, asked whether the govt was aware that the lease for mining in the Kannur limestone block at Wadi in Kalaburagi had expired.

"If it is true, what action has the govt taken against the said company for allegedly carrying out unauthorised mining at the site without paying total dues of Rs 850 crore towards royalty, rent or penalty to the govt?" she asked.

She said the law department had advised against allowing mining until the company cleared its dues, but no action was taken. Shivakumar added: "What prompted you to exempt them? If a small quarry operator did not pay royalty, would you allow him to continue operations? You would arrest him and seize equipment." BJP's CT Ravi asked, "Do your rules allow those with pending dues to continue operations?"

In reply, minister N Cheluvarayaswamy said operations continued under court directions. "A court ruled that the old licence is still valid," he said. Ravi countered: "But the court has not said do not recover dues. What does your legal team say? Why have you not recovered dues?" The minister said dues were under dispute. TNN

Bill to protect school land cleared

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: The legislative assembly Tuesday unanimously passed the Karnataka Govt Educational Institutions Lands (Protection and Regularisation) Bill, 2026, aimed at resolving long-pending disputes over ownership of land on which govt educational institutions stand.

Primary and secondary education minister **S Madhu Bangarappa** said many institutions were established on land donated by individuals, families and community organisations without formal documentation or registered transfer.

He said such contributions had supported generations of students and strengthened the state's educational infrastructure. However, in recent years, legal heirs have raised

claims citing technical deficiencies in documentation, leading to disputes and stalled development work.

Bangarappa said the legislation seeks to address these issues and provides a limited window to file claims and appeals. "The bill aims to balance individual property rights with long-term public interest, uphold the fundamental right to education, and ensure legal certainty for govt educational infrastructure," he said.

The assembly also unanimously passed the Karnataka State Civil Services (Regulation of Transfer of Teachers) (Amendment) Bill, 2026.

Introducing the amendment, Bangarappa said it enables transfers through counselling, specifies maximum tenure, and restricts transfer of teaching staff to non-teaching positions in the department and to civil services, boards or corporations. The amendment, as a one-time measure, also allows teachers to opt for transfer postings within their seniority unit, he said.

7.3k tonnes of solid waste daily in ULBs

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Some 325 urban local bodies (ULBs), excluding Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) area, generated 7,304 tonnes of solid waste daily, and the govt processed 6,083 tonnes, municipal administration minister Rahim Khan said in the legislative council Tuesday.

Replying to a question from BJP's DS Arun, Khan said solid waste was processed in 219 ULBs, and the govt has taken steps to establish waste processing units in the remaining ULBs, including 27 newly established ones.

"We prepared detailed project reports (DPRs) to establish waste processing units in 47 ULBs and DPRs will be prepared for the remaining ULBs. In some cases, the units were delayed due to lack of land and in others, cases are pending in courts," said Khan.

TOI

STRAIGHT TALK: Rahim Khan, municipal administration minister, in the council

He said the govt launched solid waste management projects worth over Rs 51 crore under Swachh Bharat Mission – Urban 2.0 project, and the state-level technical and high-powered committee gave its approval to the DPR. He said 999 works were taken up under the project and 542 have been completed.

Khan said the govt also launched a project worth Rs 259 crore to establish material recovery facilities related to dry waste management. Of the 2,370 works under this project, 1,417 were completed. He said the govt also opened sanitary landfills worth Rs 31cr in 226 ULBs.

SHORT TAKES

Building violation limit in GBA area raised to 30%

Following concerns raised by several city legislators over accuracy and credibility of ongoing drone surveys to detect property violations, the govt said it will increase permissible violation limit from the existing 10% to 30%. Responding to a question by BJP's S Suresh Kumar, minister Ramalinga Reddy, speaking on behalf of deputy CM DK Shivakumar in the assembly, said the govt also decided to suspend the earlier provision of levying double penalties and interest for violations. "We have reduced the number of years of previous records from above seven to five years for all those getting fresh khatas," Reddy said. The govt will also direct all five city corporations to meet with property owners who have appealled notices and settle penalties.

Of ₹1.2-L Cr Promised, Only ₹3,000cr Released For City: BJP
Drone overdrive, e-khata mess
MLAs slam B'luru's governance

Budget session curtailed by a day

The budget session of the legislature has been curtailed by a day and will now conclude Thursday instead of Friday, with sources citing upcoming bypolls as the reason. Speaker UT Khader said: "As per the decision of the business advisory committee, discussion on the budget will end on Tuesday and the CM will reply on Thursday, followed by passage of the Appropriation Bill. The House will then be adjourned sine die," he said. Bypolls to Bagalkot and Davanagere South seats are scheduled for April 9.

149 Indira Canteens running in 2nd phase

Municipal administration minister Rahim Khan told the council that of the 186 Indira Canteens approved by the govt under the second phase,149 were already operational. He said 22 more canteens were ready for inauguration, while the remaining 15 would be set up soon. When BJP's KS Naveen asked why the contract was given repeatedly to the same agency, urban development minister Byrathi Suresh intervened and said there is no law barring the move. "We entrusted it to an organization that works transparently and if anyone has doubts, they can file a complaint. The contract would be cancelled if it violated conditions," he said.

Warning over unanswered queries

Chairman of the legislative council, Basavaraja Horatti, warned the govt to furnish answers to all questions asked by members by Wednesday, or he would initiate disciplinary action against officials concerned. The warning came after members expressed displeasure over the govt's failure to provide replies to several questions they had raised – some of them 15 days previously. Legislators from both governing and opposition benches demanded action against officials. SL Bhojegowda of JD(S) said 287 questions in the ongoing session remained unanswered.

Ashoka alleges big developer eyeing Jakkur flying school land

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: The legislature Tuesday witnessed a heated exchange of words as opposition leader R Ashoka accused the govt of attempting to shut down the historic Jakkur aerodrome and hand over the prime land to real estate interests, triggering sharp rebuttal from

the govt. Participating in a debate on Bengaluru's infrastructure, Ashoka alleged a "top bureaucrat" is facilitating a "big developer" from Rajasthan to convert the 217-acre land parcel into a sporting hub.

Claiming the land in north Bengaluru was originally gifted by the Mysore Maharaja, he said the flying school was envisioned to train aspiring pilots from poor communities. He recalled that former PM Jawaharlal Nehru laid its foundation. Ashoka said: "There are plans to convert it into an executive club, but the Bommailed BJP govt cancelled it and reopened the flying school. But why has the state govt suddenly set its eyes on the land?"

Energy minister KJ George said the school sees limited activity. "It trains only 25 to 30 pilots. When I was Bengaluru incharge, a flyover came up at the location and DGCA refused to give a licence, citing dangers during take-off. So I wrote to the CM about building a sporting complex. No decision has been taken till date," he said.

Ashoka shot back: "Why would the govt want Jakkur land to build a sporting complex? If you want to build one, acquire or buy land elsewhere." He sought to know why MLA and revenue minister Krishna Byre Gowda was silent on this.

No political activities allowed at varsities: Min

▶Continued from page 1

The conference was organised by Prajna Pravah, Karnataka, and Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation.

State higher education minister MC Sudhakar said: "Our public universities are meant to be apolitical. No political activities should be conducted there."

The higher education department also rejected the reply given by KSOU vice-chancellor Sharanappa V Halse to a show-cause notice issued to him a day earlier. Sudhakar claimed Halse's response was "not satisfactory" and warned action would follow. "The VC is hand-in-glove with the organisers. We will initiate action against him," he told **TOI**.

The department said organising such a private event on campus could indirectly influence the ongoing investigation into alleged irregularities at the university. Calling it a breach of protocol, the minister said: "This is a state university, and they have not even bothered to inform us. If at all it was related to improving higher education, the govt should have been a part of it. We cannot misuse university campuses for certain ideological events."

KPCC spokesperson M Lakshmana alleged links between the university management and RSS.

Denying the university had any organisational role, KSOU registrar SK Naveen Kumar clarified: "Like other events, the organisers had paid the rent for the premises."

Audit cites poor planning, flawed DPRs

▶Continued from page 1

Delays in project execution further hit outcomes. The audit cited poor planning, including awarding contracts without ensuring land availability, flawed DPRs and overburdened contractors. Some projects were abandoned midway despite substantial expenditure, while others failed to take off for years.

The report flagged weak post-implementation management and overdependence on groundwater sources, raising sustainability concerns.

Despite limited broader impact on public health and employment, the report said Jal Jivan Mission did register gains on select social indicators. The mission helped ease the burden on women and contributed to reducing the drop-out rate among upper primary girls from 2.3 to 1.5 by 2023-24.

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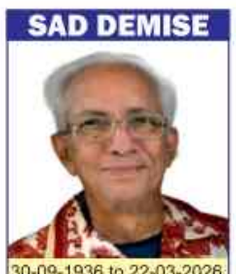

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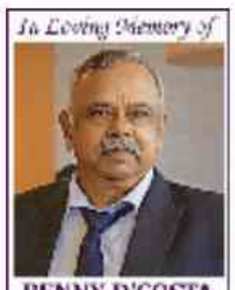

BENNY D'COSTA
[illegible]
It is with deep sorrow that we announce the passing of Benny D'Costa.
Viewing at the home residence at [illegible] on 25th March 2026.
Funeral Service at 12:30pm in Infant Jesus Church followed by burial at Hosur Cemetery, Gate No. 5

DEATH ANNIVERSARY

1st Death Remembrance

MR P M VARGHESE
03.04.1937- 25.03.2025
Miss your physical presence but your memories are alive with us.
Fondly remembered by
family members, relatives and friends near and dear

5th Death Anniversary

T P. Nambiar
Retired District & Sessions Judge, Former Judicial Member of Customs, Excise & Service Tax Appellate Tribunal
25th March
Fondly Remembered by :
Radhika Chandra Sekhar
B. Chandra Sekhar
Siddharth,Shraddha

REMEMBRANCE
SHARING MEMORIES

Remembrance
DR. M. JAYARAM
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Deeply loved, Cherished and Forever missed.
Wife, Children and Grandchildren.

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Clean treatment: BWSSB to pump up 20 of 34 STPs by end of this year

7 In East, West Zones To Cost ₹33.4 Crore

Vindhya.Pabolu
@timesofindia.com

TOI

5 STPs in Vrishabhavathi to undergo upgrade for enhancing the capacity and ensuring compliance with environmental standards

PLANTS AT PRESENT

Drainage zone	Capacity in MLD	No. of STPs
Challaghatta Valley	518.5	9
Koramangala Valley	207	8
Hebbal	278	11
Vrishabhavathi	345	5
Total	**1,348.5**	**34**

Source: State Economic Survey 25-26

Bengaluru: In a move to upgrade sewage infrastructure, the Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) is upgrading multiple rehabilitated sewage treatment plants (STPs) across the city. The focus is on enhancing the capacity and efficiency of existing STPs in both the East and West zones.

Of 34 existing STPs, 20 have been taken up under National Green Tribunal norms among which seven are at a cost of around Rs 33.4 crore and expected to be completed by this year-end.

These projects cover plants in Shivajinagar, Mahadevapura, KR Pura and Dasarahalli with capacities ranging from 2 MLD to 60 MLD, with four in the East zone and three in the West zone. In the East, plants at Ulsoor (2 MLD), Kadugodi (6 MLD), K&C Valley (60 MLD) and Yellamapalya (15 MLD) are being upgraded, while in the West, STPs at Chikkabanavara (5 MLD), Seegehali–K&C Valley (40 MLD) and Nagasandra (20 MLD) are under rehabilitation.

Officials said the rehabilitation works include modernisation of old infrastructure, upgrading treatment processes and ensuring compliance with environmental standards.

Ram Prasanth Manohar, Chairman, BWSSB said: "Rehabilitation essentially means upgrading older sewage treatment plants to meet the revised standards set by the NGT in 2018. Earlier, the treated water BOD level was 20 mg/l, which has now been reduced to 10 mg/l. Similarly, COD has come down from 250 mg/l to 50 mg/l, while total nitrogen is now capped at 10 mg/l and total phosphorus at 1 mg/l. The pH range remains between 6.5 and 8.5. Since these norms are far more stringent than before, work has been taken up."

According to him, to meet these tighter parameters, they are adding a tertiary treatment stage to existing plants. "While the conventional system — primary clarifier, aeration tank and secondary clarifier — remains, an additional unit in the form of a disc filter is being installed. This acts as a physical filtration step before chlorination, significantly improving the final treated water quality. Since these are brownfield projects, upgrades are being carried out in phases without shutting down operations, which makes execution more challenging," he added.

SEWAGE STATS

As per the Economic Survey of Karnataka 2025-26, as of March 2026, Bengaluru, with an urban population of nearly 1.5 crore, generates an estimated 1,480 million litres of sewage per day. The city is currently served by 34 STPs with a total installed capacity of 1,348.5 MLD. Of this, 1,212.7 MLD of wastewater is being treated at present, indicating a gap between sewage generation and treatment capacity

More STPs set to meet growing urban demand

Alongside the rehabilitation works, BWSSB is also rolling out new STPs in the CE (Project) zone to cater to growing urban settlements. These new plants, located in areas such as Jakkur, Pillaganahalli, Thalagattapura, Hemmigepura, Sampigehalli and Nagasandra, range from 4 MLD to 13 MLD in capacity. Each project, costing between Rs 10 crore and Rs 39 crore, is designed to meet increasing sewage treatment demand in rapidly developing localities.

The new STPs are expected to be operational by 2028, with progress already nearing 100% in some locations. Financially, these projects are also on track, with significant expenditure already made towards their completion. Officials said the inauguration of these plants will provide much-needed boost to Bengaluru's sewage management, ensuring cleaner waterways and improved environmental compliance for the city's expanding population.

Medical student dies by suicide after online gaming losses

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

A final-year MBBS student of Bidar Institute of Medical Sciences (BRIMS) allegedly hanged himself in his hostel room Tuesday after falling into debt due to losses in online gaming.

The deceased has been identified as **Anishkar Chavan**, 21, of Balatya Tanda, Chincholi taluk, Kalaburagi. The incident came to light Tuesday morning, police said.

Bidar SP Pradeep Gunti said preliminary investigation revealed Anishkar was borrowing money from his friends. He borrowed around Rs 80,000 and lost that money in online games. "While checking his mobile, we discovered he had downloaded some apps to play online games. As he lost money and continued to lose the game, he was disappointed and distressed. We also found some of his WhatsApp chats sent to his friends about it," he said.

Anishkar's elder brother is also pursuing MBBS at BRIMS, while his elder sister, who completed MBBS from the same institute is currently pursuing MD in Bengaluru.

Dr Shantala Koujalgi, director, BRIMS, said, "It is a really shocking incident and we are planning to have meetings with our heads and take measures to counsel students."

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METRO WRAP

Ex-MLA's son burnt to death

A 53-year-old man, identified as **Raju Bolshetty**, son of former MLA Baburao Bolshetty of Bailhongal taluk in Belagavi district, was burnt to death inside a car in an isolated forested area near Ramapur village in Dharwad Tuesday. Police said locals noticed the WagonR car engulfed in flames near a railway track and found his charred body. Cops suspect the victim was either brought to the spot or abducted before being murdered.

Brace for thunderstorms in B'luru, dists for 7 days

Light-to-moderate rain and thunderstorms, accompanied by lightning and gusty winds of 30–40 kmph, are likely to occur at isolated places over seven days across Karnataka. IMD scientists' forecast issued Tuesday evening was for Bengaluru Urban/Rural, Dakshina Kannada, Uttara Kannada, Bagalkote, Bidar, Kalaburagi, Gadag, Koppal, Bijapur, Ballari, Chamarajanagar, Chikkamagaluru, Chitradurga, Davanagere, Hassan, Kodagu, Mysuru, Mandya and Vijayanagar. Moderate rain, thundershowers and stronger winds of 40–50 kmph are expected at isolated places in Shivamogga, Haveri, Belagavi and Dharwad.

Japan firm signs ₹6.1k-cr loan for Orange Line

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) signed a Rs 6,100-crore loan agreement with the central govt for Orange Line, to be taken up under Phase III of Namma Metro. The 45-km line will be built on Outer Ring Road from Kempapura to JP Nagar 4th Phase and Hosahalli to Kadabagere on Magadi Road.

HC disposes of plea seeking removal of trees

The high court Tuesday disposed of a PIL seeking directions to GBA to remove all conocarpus trees in the city. "We do not consider it apposite to pass any order now. However, so far as future plantation is concerned, authorities can take into account the issues highlighted by the petitioner," a division bench said.

The PIL submitted that the Supreme Court itself noted these trees are hazardous to nature, causing respiratory issues and breathing difficulties. Gujarat and Tamil Nadu have prohibited plantation of these trees, the petitioner said, adding they have been planted near Maharani's College, city civil court and roadsides.

Man nabbed at rly station with drugs worth ₹8cr

DRI sleuths caught a 26-year-old man from Mizoram on his arrival from New Delhi at KSR railway station and seized 8.3kg of methamphetamine hydrochloride (crystal meth), worth Rs 8.3 crore. Based on his statement, two Bengaluru youths were arrested later. Searches unearthed 200 sim cards, 45 debit/credit cards and multiple mobile phones.

Waqf verification drive triggers concern; 650 owners get notice

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A fresh controversy has erupted in Gokak taluk, Belagavi district, after more than 650 landowners received notices from the revenue department, seeking property details as part of a Waqf-related verification exercise covering around 2,223 acres.

The notices, issued by the office of Gokak tahsildar, pertain to multiple survey numbers in areas including Maratha Galli and Ambiger Galli in Gokak town.

Landowners have been told to furnish ownership proof and transaction records from the time of purchase. Gokak tahsildar Mohan Bhasme said the initiative follows directives from senior authorities after the Karnataka State Board of Auqaf sought verification of properties in specific survey numbers.

Residents, however, expressed distress over sudden notices. Kempanna Kadakol, a resident of Prabha Nagar, said his family, which had purchased a small plot over a decade ago and built a house, was taken by surprise. "We have no clarity about past records. The notice has caused panic in our family," he said.

Villagers from Shingalapur recalled a similar exercise in 2012, following recommendations of the Anwar Manippady Commission, when landowners had to submit documents for verification. "We had already complied then," they said.

Shabbirahmed Jamadar, a senior member of the District Waqf Advisory Committee, Chikodi, said the land in question was recorded as Waqf property in 1968. He noted that subsequent legal challenges saw courts rule in favour of farmers. Since the top court had also referred the matter to the Waqf Law Committee, it has been pending since 1994.

Jamadar said the matter has resurfaced following amendments to the Waqf Act in April 2025 and the launch of UMEED portal by the Union minority affairs ministry for digitised verification and monitoring of Waqf properties. A request for verification was reportedly raised on the portal by one Hasansab Peerzade of Jalal Bhukhari Trust, which triggered the current issue.

LPG costs add to distress, hotel owner ends life

A 65-year-old hotel owner allegedly died by suicide at his eatery in Hukkeri town, Belagavi district, Tuesday morning, with police citing severe financial distress, compounded by high LPG costs, as the primary cause.

The deceased, Ramachandra Shankar Halluri, had been running Hanuman Hotel near the old bus stand for the past 16 years. Police said Halluri had been facing sustained business losses over the past 4-5 years. He was facing a debt of around Rs 11 lakh.

On Tuesday, Halluri is said to have opened his hotel as usual around 6am. He was later found hanging inside the premises. Preliminary investigation indicated the primary reason for the suicide was financial burden.

Police dismissed rumours linking the death solely to disruption in LPG supply. "A filled gas cylinder was available at the hotel," the officer said, noting that Halluri had struggled to purchase commercial LPG cylinders at higher prices amid supply crunch, adding to financial strain. TNN

Towing has begun in central, west corp areas: Police chief

▶ Continued from page 1

Bengaluru police commissioner Seemanth Kumar Singh said the rollout has already begun in Bengaluru Central and West city corporations. "Soon, it will be extended to other divisions as well," he told **TOI**.

Joint commissioner (traffic) Kartik Reddy said the move is aimed at tackling worsening traffic congestion caused by illegal parking. "The towing vehicles will have CCTV cameras fitted at the front and back. Upon spotting any parking violation, police will make an announcement and wait a few minutes for the vehicle to be removed. Thereafter, it will be towed away," he said.

Officials said all personnel involved, including the ASI, will be equipped with body-worn cameras to ensure transparency.

Towing of vehicles was suspended in Feb 2022, following complaints of unruly behaviour by private towing staff and allegations of corruption involving traffic police personnel. Since then, the authorities had relied on wheel clamps to penalise violators, but officials said the measure proved ineffective as vehicles remained stuck in one place.

SC reserves orders on Ranya's plea

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Supreme Court Tuesday reserved its orders on petitions filed by Ranya Rao, actor and daughter of senior IPS officer Ramachandra Rao, and her associate Sahil Sakaria Jain.

They had challenged the Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act, 1974 (Cofeposa) clamped against them by the central govt last year. Ranya's counsel argued there were procedural lapses by the authority as representation was not considered properly. But the additional solicitor-general countered it.

K'taka halves varsity dvpt funds in 2 yrs

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Bengaluru: The development funds released by the state govt for universities has been reduced by half in just two years. As per the department of higher education, Rs 41 crore was released as grants for the development of universities in 2023-24. In 2024-25, this was reduced to Rs 30 crore, before falling further to Rs 20 crore in 2025-26.

Karnataka has 32 public universities. The higher education department said that universities are autonomous institutions and need to raise resources internally. Higher education minister MC Sudhakar, during the ongoing legislature session, said: "Money collected from internal resources should be used as development funds. Currently, more than 50% of internal resources are spent on guest lecturers, outsourced staff, and temporary teaching and non-teaching posts. This is beyond the accepted limits. Instead, the university should spend more on development. The university has to meet expenses from internal resources."

₹20 CR IN 2025-26

While staff salaries are covered by the govt, universities are bound to find the money to pay guest faculty and outsourced employees. Currently, there are requests to fund the salaries of the outsourced employees as well.

"Most of the universities, including us, rely on affiliation fees from colleges, exam and tuition fees, and research funding from various sources," said the VC of a university. It may be recalled that when a few universities were unable to fund pension disbursal, the govt had to release some money recently to cover the shortage.

Youngster wins gold in U-19 contest against 78 shooters

Nidhi Mittal, IBDP Year 2 student at Greenwood High International Campus, Sarjapur, won gold medal in the girls' under-19 peep sight air rifle event at the 69th National School Games (SGFI) held in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.

Competing against 78 of India's top young shooters chosen through competitions from International Curriculum Schools (ISSO), state boards, CBSE, ICSE and other approved curriculum bodies from India, Nidhi delivered an exceptional performance, scoring 419.2 to claim first place.

MAKING EVERY SHOT COUNT

Nidhi had earlier secured gold medal at ISSO to qualify for SGFI.

The school said that it is proud of Nidhi's success and wished she would achieve much more in her future endeavours.

Students open up about screen time & burnout

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Bengaluru: A mix of introspection, expert insights and a touch of humour marked an engaging session on digital habits for students of MS Ramaiah Institute of Management (MSRIM), as The Times of India's national initiative, Let's D-Stress, hosted its first on-campus event in the city Tuesday.

The session focused on helping students identify patterns of excessive device use and understand its impact on attention span, sleep and overall mental well-being through interactive discussions.

Participant admits to 16 hrs of daily screen use

Ahead of the session, students were invited to map their daily screen time on an interactive board using sticky notes. A significant number placed themselves in the 'deep explorer' (4–8 hours) and 'digital native' (8+ hours) categories. One student even admitted to an astonishing 16 hours of screen time daily. Despite this, most participants felt their usage was reasonable and not excessive.

Addressing this perception, Dr Eesha Sharma, associate professor of child and adolescent psychiatry at Nimhans, noted that what feels justified may not always be healthy. "The brain, at its simplest, is always either reacting or responding to the world around us. Every notification, every scroll, every interaction keeps us in this loop of constant engagement. But thinking is different. Thinking requires a pause. The problem is, when we are always reacting and responding — especially through our phones — we rarely give ourselves the time and space to truly think," she said.

Dr Eesha urged students to allow themselves moments of boredom, emphasising that these pauses are essential. It is during such periods, she said, that the brain shifts into its "default mode" — a state where it processes experiences, consolidates memories, and makes sense of information.

RJ and content creator Shaayan Bhattacharya, who hosted the event, encouraged students to reflect on their habits without judgment. His witty exchanges sparked candid responses, including a surprising revelation — many students said social media was not their primary distraction; instead, ChatGPT accounted for a large share of their screen time. The interactive format also gave students an opportunity to raise questions around digital behaviour and mental health, touching on emerging ideas such as meta-thinking.

Let's D-Stress campaign aims for a nationwide dialogue on digital stress, its implications and practical ways to manage it. It was launched in collaboration with Kochi-based Centre of Excellence in Neurodegeneration and Brain Health (CENABH) as the knowledge partner, with IIT Delhi and Nimhans as solution partners.

Chethan Shivakumar

UNPLUGGING: **The Times of India** hosted its first on-campus event of its national initiative, **Let's D-Stress**, at MS Ramaiah Institute of Management in Bengaluru Tuesday

"The session helped students understand a very basic but important idea — the need to reconnect with themselves, not through digital media, but through interactions with people in the real world"

Savitha Rani | PROFESSOR AND DEAN (IN CHARGE), MSRIM

"I wish we could have sessions like these more often because as clinicians, we usually see people only after problems have already escalated and we would have missed many opportunities for early intervention. Evidence shows universal prevention strategies, introduced early, are far more effective"

Dr Eesha Sharma | ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRY, NIMHANS

"The session was interactive and really insightful, especially because we don't openly talk about these issues. It was enlightening to hear Dr Eesha discuss things we deal with in daily life. It has definitely made me reflect on my digital habits and realise that they are manageable with the right approach"

Divyamsika P | STUDENT, PGDM

Scan the QR to take a scientific psychological assessment of your digital habits.

"Having a psychiatrist at the session made it much more engaging for me, especially since I'm interested in psychological aspects. Hearing her perspective on real-world issues was really valuable, and it genuinely helped me de-stress — many of my questions were answered through her insights"

Aditya Dam | STUDENT, PGDM

Silver jubilee celebrations highlight value-based education

Sri Jnanakshi Vidhyaniketan School celebrated its silver jubilee on Dec 21, 2025. The celebration marked the school's journey with the blessings of Paramapujya Sri Sri Sri Tiruchi Mahaswamiji and highlighted its commitment to value-based education rooted in Indian culture and sanatana dharma.

The programme featured a samvada session between students and guests.

Chairperson of Karnataka State Commission for Women Nagalakshmi Chowdhary stressed the importance of dedication and hard work and encouraged girls to consider public life. Deputy director at Isro S Venkateshwara Sharma spoke on the need for science and spirituality to progress together and assured support for students interested in building a mini-satellite.

Author Shantanu Gupta urged students to draw strength from the life of Shri Rama during challenging times. Shri Swami Nirbhayananda Saraswati Swamiji emphasised strengthening physical, intellectual and emotional well-being. Sri Sri Sri Hariharapura Mahaswamiji observed that while technology offers comfort, it cannot replace traditional values. Sri Sri Sri Jayendra Puri Mahaswamiji highlighted education should benefit society, while stressing daily attention to physical and mental health.

CELEBRATING THE JOURNEY

Honorary secretary Hayagreeva Acharya was conferred the title, Sarva Santa Priya Seva Senadhipathi.

Students dazzle at annual day prog

Schoenstatt St. Mary's High School & PU College, Nagasandra, celebrated its annual day, Schoen Fiesta, on Dec 3, 2025. Former group director at UR Rao Satellite Centre, Isro, MS Srinivasan, was the chief guest. He unveiled 100 years of Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary emblem. MLA S Muniraju was the presiding dignitary.

The guests of honour were DDPI KG Anjanappa and SI of Peenya police station Chitresh. Regional superior Rev. Sr Lizzy Arakkaparambil awarded prizes to achievers. The programme featured an invocation, choir, skits and an array of dance performances. The celebration concluded with the school anthem.

VIBRANT PERFORMANCES

TIMES NATION

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2026

NO SIGN OF ACE RALLY DRIVER HARI SINGH 5 DAYS AFTER SPEEDBOAT ACCIDENT, SEARCH CONTINUES

GOT LOOKOUT CIRCULAR ISSUED TO PREVENT ASTROLOGER FROM FLEEING COUNTRY: FADNAVIS

HACK OF THE DAY — **CHECK YOUR AADHAAR AUTHENTICATION HISTORY**

WHAT IT SOLVES: Helps you detect whether your Aadhaar has been used recently for authentication in places or services you do not recognize

WHAT TO DO: Review your Aadhaar authentication history online to spot unusual activity early

STEPS:

1. **Visit** the UIDAI or myAadhaar portal
2. **Log in** using your Aadhaar number and OTP
3. **Open** the "Authentication History" section
4. **Select** the date range you want to review
5. **Check** the authentication records and note any entry that seems unfamiliar

CAREFUL: If you see suspicious entries, act quickly. Lock your biometrics and contact UIDAI support or the relevant service provider for clarification

SCAN FOR MORE

Hacks are based on verified public sources. Readers are advised to follow official websites & updated rules

Tiger carcass found in Maha, 4 arrested

A partially decomposed carcass of a tiger was found in Chandrapur forests of Maharashtra on Monday in a suspected case of poaching, following which four people were arrested and remanded to forest department's custody for three days beginning Tuesday, **reports Mazhar Ali**. According to forest officials, the carcass was in an advanced stage of decomposition, suggesting that the animal may have died nearly three months ago. Due to its putrefied condition, autopsy could not be conducted.

A veterinary officer examined the carcass at the site in the presence of forest personnel. The questioning of the four arrested suspects revealed that after they came across the decomposing carcass in the forest, they removed the animal's claws and teeth. All four were produced before a local court on Tuesday and remanded to forest department's custody for three days.

STATISTICS A slice of life in numbers

Why more young men are leaving education in India

Periodic Labour Force Survey data shows rising financial pressure on households, with the share of young men aged 15-24 who are leaving education to supplement family incomes rising from 58% in 2017 to 72% in 2023

Share (%) of men aged 15 to 24 leaving education, by reason

Source: State of Working Report 2026

Last-minute cancellation of rail tickets gets costlier

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New Delhi: A last-minute change in plans will cost you dearly, as the railways have announced a revised rule linking refunds to the timing of ticket cancellations before the scheduled departure of trains. As per the new rule, passengers who cancel their tickets less than eight hours before departure will receive no refund, while cancellations made between eight and 24 hours before departure will result in a 50% deduction.

Announcing the changes as a part of ongoing reforms, railway minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Tuesday that under the new norm there will be 25% deduction for tickets cancelled between 24 and 72 hours before train's departure while minimal amount will be deducted for cancellation before 72 hours. The new rules will take effect between April 1 and 15.

At present, passengers get no refund for cancelling a ticket within four hours and 50% deduction happens for tickets cancelled within 4-12 hours before train departure. Similarly, only 25% is deducted for tickets cancelled within 12-48 hours and there is minimal deduction for cancellation before 48 hours. Vaishnaw said tighter refund norms have been decided after investigation in the light of touts still hoarding some tickets and black marketing them.

He said decoy customers sent by railways found how touts take advantage of the provision of last minute cancellation. The changes will discourage black marketing and last-minute sale of tickets by agents, he added.

The minister also announced that passengers who have booked online tickets will be able to change the boarding point (station) 30 minutes before the scheduled departure.

LS clears tweak to bill on trans persons amid oppn protests

Bill Listed To Be Taken Up By RS Today

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Members of the transgender community at a meeting with leader of opposition Rahul Gandhi (not in pic) in New Delhi on Tuesday

New Delhi: Even as the opposition demanded that the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill 2026 be referred to a parliamentary standing committee for wider consultations, Lok Sabha passed it by a voice vote, with govt responding to allegations of "exclusion" by saying the changes were aimed at ensuring that the protection and benefits under the law reach genuine transgender persons.

The bill is listed to be taken up by Rajya Sabha on Wednesday. The opposition slammed govt for taking away the right to self-determination of gender identity that was upheld by Supreme Court in its landmark NALSA judgment. Congress MPs S Jothimani set off the debate from Opposition's side and along with Supriya Sule (NCP-SP), Anand Bhadauria (Samajwadi Party), T. Sumathy (DMK), June Maliah (TMC), Arvind Ganpat Sawant (Shiv Sena UBT), Abhay Kumar Sinha (RJD) and other Congress MPs opposed the legislation.

The MPs contended that the bill was introduced without adequate consultations with the transgender community and it narrows the definition by excluding self-perceived identities and introduces a medical board, which would further their exclusion and violate the rights of TG persons. MPs from TDP, (BJP), JD(U) and Shiv Sena supported the bill, building on the govt's arguments. Replying to a discussion on the bill, social justice and empowerment minister Virendra Kumar said that the 2019 law was brought to provide protection and welfare to transgender persons, and that the amendment bill aims to focus on those who face severe social boycott due to their biological condition.

In the statement and objects of the bill, it is stated, "The purpose of the Act was to protect a specified class of persons socially and culturally known as transgender people who face societal discrimination of an extreme and oppressive nature." It adds, "The purpose was and is not to protect each and every class of persons with various gender identities, self-perceived sex/gender identities or gender fluidities."

In a major departure from the existing law, the bill proposes to omit the clause that allowed "self-perceived gender identity" to be the basis for self-determination and identification for grant of transgender certificate by the district magistrate.

The provision of a medical board headed by chief medical officer has been introduced in the bill, and going forward, the district magistrate will issue a certificate of transgender identity after examining the recommendation of the medical board, cited as "authority", to be constituted by central or state govts.

The minister defended stricter penal provisions in the bill, stating that they are necessary to prevent exploitation, coercion and harm, especially in cases involving children.

Govt to hold all-party meet over W Asia conflict today

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: After Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a statement in both Houses of Parliament on the West Asia conflict, govt has called an all-party meeting over the issue on Wednesday as it seeks to address the points raised by different parties and present a united face over the spiralling crisis.

Senior govt functionaries, including defence minister **Rajnath Singh**, home minister Amit Shah and external affairs minister S Jaishankar, are likely to be present in the first such meeting over an issue that has drawn criticism from opposition parties over the govt's response.

In his statements in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, Modi has emphasised on the challenge to India posed by the conflict as energy supply to the country has been affected due to Iran's blockade of the Strait of Hormuz and the presence of a huge Indian diaspora in Gulf countries.

University can't restrict freedom of speech over ideology, says Delhi HC

Abhinav.Garg
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New Delhi: A university cannot restrict freedom of speech and expression merely because the views expressed by students do not align with its ideology, Delhi High Court has said, setting aside the suspension of a student of Dr BR Ambedkar University who was penalised for participating in a sit-in protest.

Observing that educational institutions are instrumentalities of the state, Justice Jasmeet Singh said a university performs an indispensable public function by shaping future citizens.

"The university cannot restrict speech and peaceful expression of ideas merely because the views expressed by a group of students do not align with the ideology of the management," the judge said.

"When students express disagreement peacefully, without violence or serious disruption, such conduct cannot be treated as falling outside the scope of holistic development," the court observed. It further underlined that a university's role is not to suppress every form of dissent but to ensure that such expression is answered and catered to. The varsity alleged that the petitioner violated a court order by participating in a sit-down protest. The HC, however, said: "In the present case, there are no allegations that the so-called peaceful protest resulted in interfering with the functioning of the respondent university or academic pursuits of other students."

India's 3rd spaceport may come up near Somnath in Guj

New Delhi: After Sriharikota spaceport and the upcoming launch port at Kulasekarapattinam in Tamil Nadu's Thoothukudi district, India's third satellite launch centre is likely to come up in Gujarat, **reports Surendra Singh**. Gujarat science and technology minister Arjun Modhwadia recently announced in assembly a proposed launch site near Gir Somnath district along the Arabian Sea coast has been identified.

Modhwadia said the site was identified after consultations with Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe). "As per our request, IN-SPACe has found a suitable location which can be developed as a launchpad for putting satellites into orbit, just like Sriharikota. The location is between the UT of Diu and Kodinar," he said. Gujarat govt is also setting up a space park to attract firms working in space technology. "I am happy to say Azista Aerospace has started work to manufacture small satellites at a cost of Rs 500 crore," the minister told the assembly.

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CIN : U40109PB2010SGC033813 Website : www.pspcl.in
GVK Power (Goindwal Sahib) Limited
Regd. Office: Plot No. 10, Paigah Colony, Sardar Patel Road, Secunderabad-500003, Telangana, India CIN : U40109TG1997PLC028483
(A wholly owned subsidiary of Guru Amar Das Thermal Power Limited, GATPL)
(A step down wholly owned subsidiary of Punjab State Power Corporation Limited, PSPCL)

HOD-CIVIL, GATP, Goindwal Sahib, invites E-Tender for the work of :

1 **Tender Enquiry No. 137/GATP/CIVIL/50007517 dated 23/03/2026**
"Excavator on Hire basis for River Intake Sand Removal Works"
Area of 2 x 270 MW Thermal Power Plant GATP, Goindwal Sahib"
at 2X270 MW Guru Amardas Thermal Plant (GATP), Goindwal Sahib, Distt.: Tarn Taran, Punjab as per details given in the tender specifications.*

For detailed NIT & tender specifications, please refer to **https://eproc.punjab.gov.in** from 23/03/2026 from 17:00 Hrs. onwards.
Note : Corrigendum and addendum, if any, will be published online at https://eproc.punjab.gov.in
GATP-30/26, DPR/Pb.:1079/12/2025-26/9825

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BALLARI MEDICAL COLLEGE AND RESEARCH CENTRE, BALLARI.
Reg.No:205/1995-96-Recognized by Medical Council of India, New Delhi vide No:MCI-57(3)/79-Med/1912, Dtd.16-04-1979
e-mail-ids:directorbmcrcballari@gmail.com,
website : https://bmcrc.karnataka.gov.in

NO. BMCRC/TENDER/GNL-1/03/2025-26
DATE:-20.03.2026

e-TENDER NOTIFICATION

Tenders are invited from providing Man power for Cleaning & Sanitation Services to Medical College Hospital, BMCRC Ballari under Two bid system through e-procurement portal https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in of Government of Karnataka as per the KTPP Act-1999-2000. The interested bidders are request to submit Tender in above said e-portal from 20.03.2026 to 21.04.2026 up to 5.00 PM. The total approximate cost of tender is Rs.737.00 Lakhs. Further details may be obtained in the above said website and www.bmcrc.karnataka.gov.in.

Sd/- Dean & Director,
BMCRC, Ballari
DIPR/Ballari/1178/KSMCA/2025-26

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTORATE OF MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION
9th Floor, Vishweshwaraih Towers, Dr. Ambedkar Veedhi, Bangalore-560001. Telephone: 080-22866302/22867172
Fax: 080-22863576/22861665 Email: sedmatech@gmail.com
Website: www.municipaladmn.gov.in

No: 1802916/DMA/TECH/MGNV/31/2025 Date: 24-03-2026

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION

The Tenders are invited in KPP Portal for Infrastructure Development works under Mahatma Gandhi Nagara Vikasa Yojana (Phase-2) Scheme as per UIDF guidelines in Ballari City Corporation limits. The details are as follows.

Sl. No.	Description	Project Cost. (Rs. in Lakhs)
1	DMA/2025-26/RD/WORK_INDENT39802/CALL-2 Ballari City Corporation limits.	1290.00

The interested bidders / agencies are requested to participate within the date stipulated indicated in the K.P.P Portal. Any further information can be obtained through K.P.P Portal only.

Sd/- Director,
Directorate of Municipal Administration,
Bengaluru

DIPR/CP/SMCL/6416/2025-26

KARNATAKA STATE MINERALS CORPORATION LIMITED
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
Regd. Office : TTMC 'A' Block 5th Floor, BMTC Building, KH Road, Shanthinagar, Bengaluru-560027.
Phone: 080-22278813/14/15/16, Fax : 080-22213172
Website: https://ksmc.karnataka.gov.in

KSMCL/Civil/IT Park Hassan/05-11/2025-26/3327 Date: 23.03.2026

e-TENDER INVITATION (Call-2)

KSMCL invites 2nd time e-Tender for selection of Comprehensive Project Development Consultant (CPDC) for the Development of Integrated Technology Park at 13 Acres 24.5 Guntas of land at B. Katihalli Village, Hassan District.

CALENDER OF EVENTS

Downloading of Tender document from e-portal	From 24.03.2026
Last date for submission of Tender through e-portal	22.04.2026 Up to 5.00 PM
Date of opening of Technical Bid	24.04.2026 At 11.00 AM
Earnest Money Deposit	Rs. 5,00,000/- (Rs. Five Lakh Only)

Tender documents may be downloaded from e-procurement GOK Platform website: https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in Contact for any support in uploading & registration, E-procurement Helpdesk: 080-46010000/68948777.

Sd/-
GENERAL MANAGER (A&V)
DIPR/CP/6390/AKAR/2025-26

NATIONAL HEALTH MISSION
Karnataka State Health & Family Welfare Society
Arogya Soudha, 1st Floor, Magadi Road, Bengaluru - 23
Ph: 080-23113584 e-mail: pdrch-hfws@karnataka.gov.in

No: HFWS-NCFOOOTHR(OTHR)/15/2026 (E-2050338) Date: 24.03.2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION (Through e-Procurement)

"For Appointment of Statutory Auditor for Karnataka State Health & Family Welfare Society (KSHFWS), District Health Societies (DHS) for Audit of all programmes FY 25-26 under NHM"

National Health Mission invites for "Appointment of Statutory Auditor for Karnataka State Health & Family Welfare Societies (KSHFWS), District Health Society (DHS) for Audit of all programmes FY 25-26 under NHM"

Tender No: NHM/2025-26/SE0037/Call-2 - Statutory Auditor for KSHFWS.

The detailed notification regarding eligibility and other details can be obtained by logging on to **www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in**. The invitation for tender document can be downloaded through **"e-procurement portal"** from **24/03/2026** onwards and last date for receipt of tender is on or before **02/04/2026 at 05.30 pm.** Interested bidders may participate by submitting their bids on or before the prescribed last date.

Further details can be obtained from the office of the undersigned during the office hours from 11:00 am to 04:30 pm.

Sd/-
Project Director (RCH)
DIPR/CP/6442/SA/2025-26

AIADMK rains sops: Free refrigerators, 3 LPG refills/1yr for ration card holders

Also Pledges 2-Wheelers For 5 Lakh Working Women, Edu Loan Waiver

Shanmughasundaram.J
@timesofindia.com

Chennai: Free refrigerators for all rice ration card holders in Tamil Nadu, a one-time family relief of Rs 10,000 to cushion impact of rising prices, free bus travel for men, doubling monthly cash assistance for women from Rs 1,000 to Rs 2,000, and a complete waiver of education loans are among key promises made by AIADMK in its manifesto for the state polls.

There are about 2.2 crore rice ration card holders, according to state govt data, who will be eligible to avail the freebies, if AIADMK-led alliance forms the govt. Rice ration card holders, who receive 20 kg of free rice, and commodities such as sugar, toor dal and palmolein oil at subsidised rates each month, are the largest group among several categories of ration card holders in the state.

BATTLEGROUND TAMIL NADU

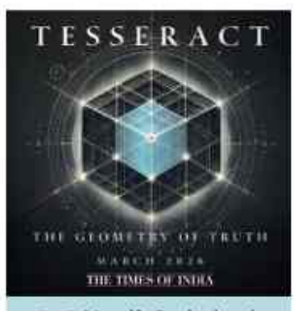
The 297-point manifesto, released by party general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami , has a host of populist and welfare schemes aimed at multiple voter segments. The party has promised three free LPG cylinders every year and a kilo of dal and one litre of cooking oil for free every month to ration cardholders, and Amma two-wheelers to 5 lakh working women with a subsidy of Rs 25,000. It has assured of hiking social security pensions for elderly and others eligible to Rs 2,000 and increasing rural employment scheme to 150 days. Free bus travel scheme, currently available to women, will be extended to men. The manifesto promises a compensation of Rs 25 lakh to kin of fishermen who die during fishing expeditions, and Rs 10 lakh for families in case Jallikattu bull tamers die during the sport. The party has promised to increase medical reservation for govt school students who clear NEET from 7.5% to 10%, and to bring IVF treatment under the CM health insurance scheme.

PTI

AIADMK chief Edappadi K Palaniswami releases the party's manifesto, in Chennai, Tuesday

For farmers, crop loans availed through cooperative societies would be waived; MSP for paddy fixed at Rs 3,500 per quintal; and steps taken to ensure a remunerative price of Rs 4,500 per tonne for sugarcane, the party said.

Lashing out at the DMK dispensation, and accusing CM M K Stalin of presiding over an incompetent, inefficient, corrupt and dictatorial govt, the manifesto appealed to the people to "end the advertisement model govt...that survives by deceiving and cheating the people", and support the AIADMK-led front.



My wife Bayjool and I entered the familiar Jamshed Bhabha Theatre, only to experience the unfamiliar. Tesseract: The Geometry of Truth unfolded before us in world-class choreography, and a flawless, invigorating dance performance. It was a narrative whose unique and thought-provoking tone was set by Meera Jain in her introduction. The audience delighted in rare gems from The Times of India's vast archives, and soaked in a spectacle of colour and consciousness. Also, the unconventional theme forced one to think of truth and time in more ways than one

— Amit Desai
LEADING LAWYER

SC asks Bengal govt how can ED approach it when complaint is against CM

AmitAnand.Choudhary
@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the West Bengal govt how can a central agency approach a state authority headed by the CM when its complaint is against the CM herself. The court put the question to CM Mamata Banerjee's counsel Kapil Sibal when he argued that Enforcement Directorate cannot petition SC over alleged violation of its fundamental rights and should instead resort to statutory remedies, like lodging FIR under BNS.

I-PAC RAIDS

Sibal told a bench of Justices Prashant Kumar Mishra and N V Anjaria that the allegation levelled by ED amounts to violation of statutory rights for which a police complaint could be filed, and the violation of statutory rights is not a violation of fundamental rights to justify a writ petition.

"If the CM barges into an ED investigation, your idea of remedy for ED is to go to the state govt which is headed by the CM and inform them about it and seek remedy," the bench asked Sibal while hearing petitions filed by ED and its officers against Bengal govt, CM, Kolkata Police commissioner and other state officials for not allowing it to discharge duties while carrying out raids in Kolkata in Jan, including at political consultancy firm I-PAC's office, in connection with a money laundering probe linked to the coal 'scam' case. The senior advocate, however, said the bench was wrongly assuming that the CM has committed an offence when the matter was still to be investigated. He said govt officials acting under the statutory provision cannot invoke fundamental rights in the event of obstruction in discharge of duties and there are statutory remedies for it.

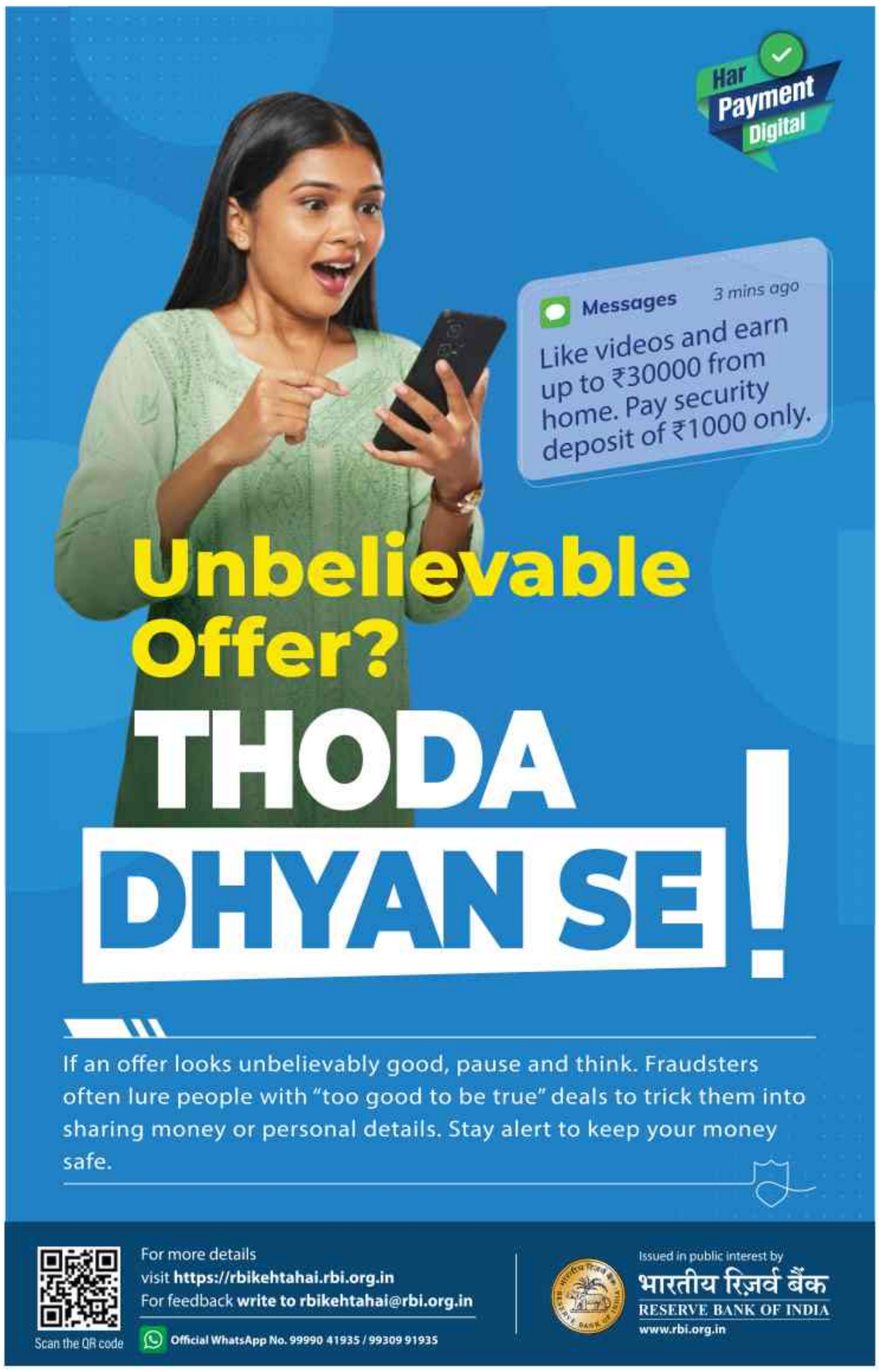
Officer to face action for BJP seal on EC letter: Kerala CEO

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

T'puram: Kerala's chief electoral officer (CEO) Rathan U Kelkar amended Tuesday his initial statement about a "clerical error" being responsible for BJP's seal appearing on an Election Commission letter to political parties, acknowledging that it was a "serious lapse" for which action had already been initiated against the officer who handled the file.

"The use of a political party's seal in an EC communication is a grave oversight. Further steps will be initiated based on the ongoing inquiry's findings," Kelkar told media. The CEO said his office had also sought legal opinion on BJP candidate B Gopalakrishnan's "Hindu MLA" remark during campaigning.

The controversy pertains to a purported campaign video in which Gopalakrishnan declares that Guruvayur constituency hasn't elected a Hindu MLA in nearly five decades.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Smt. Sunetra Ajit Pawar
Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra
Shri Ganesh Naik
Forest Minister of Maharashtra
SCAN TO VISIT WEBSITE
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Response Solutions

Harish Rana's cremation to be held today morning

▸ Continued from page 1

Harish's life took a tragic turn in 2013 when he fell from the fourth floor of his paying guest accommodation in Kharar and suffered severe brain injury. He was in the final semester of his BTech degree in civil engineering at Punjab University. Despite treatment at multiple hospitals — including PGI Chandigarh, AIIMS Delhi, Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital and Lok Nayak Hospital — he developed diffuse axonal injury and remained in a permanent vegetative state with quadriplegia and 100% disability.

Since then, he had been bedridden, dependent on a feeding tube and constant care. His parents, Ashok Rana and Nirmala Devi, cared for him at home for over a decade, under severe emotional and financial strain. His father had told the apex court that passive euthanasia would restore Harish's dignity after years of irreversible suffering.

Hospital officials said the care followed was in line with standard palliative protocol, focused on dignity and relief from distress rather than prolonging life through invasive measures. Doctors said the body would be kept in the hospital mortuary overnight, and the cremation will take place Wednesday morning.

IISc builds microbots that carry quantum sensors into living cells

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: In a step towards probing the inner workings of living cells with precision, researchers from IISc have developed a technique to actively steer quantum sensors through the dense, viscous interiors of biological systems.

The work addresses a long-standing limitation in cellular sensing: tiny probes often drift aimlessly, relying on chance encounters with molecules they are meant to detect.

Cells are not empty spaces. Their interiors are crowded and gel-like, making it difficult for nanoscale sensors to move freely. This restricts measurements of key parameters such as temperature, viscosity, and chemical activity.

The IISc team flipped the problem. Instead of waiting for molecules to reach the sensor, they built a system that carries the sensor to where measurements are needed. At the centre of the approach is a nanodiamond embedded with a nitrogen vacancy defect.

This defect allows the sensor to respond to changes in its surroundings through shifts in its quantum spin state, which can be read out using fluorescence. Such sensors are known for their sensitivity, but positioning them inside cells has been a challenge.

Earlier methods relied on optical tweezers, which use tightly focused laser beams to trap and move particles. While effective, the intense light can damage delicate biological material. The IISc team avoided this by attaching the nanodiamond to a tiny, helical microbot made partly of iron.

Another hurdle at such small scales is Brownian motion — the constant, random jostling caused by surrounding molecules. This can cause the sensor to orient unpredictably, introducing noise and reducing measurement reliability. By controlling the microbot's alignment with an external magnetic field, the researchers were able to hold the sensor steady and suppress this noise.

"We are able to counter Brownian motion with magnetic manipulation," Ambarish Ghosh, professor, Center for Nanoscience and Engineering, said.

OBCs score high marks in written exams despite drag in interviews

▸ Continued from page 1

Shashank Ratnoo, an advocate specialising in issues concerning OBCs and reservation, said, "Despite a certain drag in OBCs' marks in interviews, their marks in written exams were so high that it has resulted in better final cut-off than EWS."

The EWS quota was carved out in 2019 to provide 10% reservation to financially weaker individuals among the 'general' communities, while the Mandal quotas for backwards has been in operation since 1995.

In 2023 and 2024, EWS trailed the backward classes in the Mains examinations. But the dynamic of competitiveness between the two reserved categories proved complex, as the forwards prevailed in the ultimate test by virtue of greater score in interviews.

In CSE-2024, the cut-off for EWS in the Mains exams was 696 marks as compared to 702 for OBCs.

But in the final results after the interview, EWS had a cut-off merit of 917 marks, against 910 for OBCs.

The year before that, in the Mains part, OBCs scored a cut-off of 712 as compared to 706 for EWS.

But in the final, OBCs trailed with a cut-off of 919 to EWS which had 923 as the minimum marks.

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Blocks & Slides 2015
FNAC Slides 2015
PAP Smears 2020

Copies of all lab reports along with slides and blocks will be furnished to any patient / legal representative on a written request addressed to the Director - Professional Services within 30 days of publication of this notice.

Director - Professional Services
P. D. Hinduja Hospital & Medical Research Centre, Veer Sawarkar Marg, Mahim, Mumbai - 400016.

personal

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Amogh M, S/o Mahesh Kumar, aged 23 years, residing at #3633, Prestige Kew Gardens, Yemalur Main Road, Yemalur, Bangalore - 560037, do hereby declare that I have changed my name from Amogh M to Amogh M Padukone as per affidavit dated 14-03-2026 sworn before Notary H. Udaya Kumar Shetty at Kundapura. Henceforth, I shall be known as Amogh M Padukone for all purposes.

I, Amina Sameerah Obedullah (Old Name), W/o of Obedullah residing at No.25/3, 4th Cross, LIC Colony, 3rd Block East, Jayanagar, Bengaluru - 560011, Karnataka, India, changed my name from Amina Sameerah Obedullah to Amina Sameerah vide affidavit dated 24.03.2026, sworn before Notary, Aravind Patil G.G., Henceforth, I shall be known as Amina Sameerah for all purposes.

ARUNPRIYA Nanjegowda, F/O Ananya Arunpriya, residing at No 4022A, 1st Cross, HAL 2nd Stage, Indiranagar, Bengaluru 560008. Have changed my daughter's name from Ananya Arunpriya to Ananya Priya Arunpriya, vida affidavit dated 10.03.2026 sworn before notary Y.R. Chandrasekar at Bangalore.

I Katheyani S. aged about 45 years w/o Mr. Veerabhadhaiah K.M. residing at No.203/A, 4th main Road, 9th cross, Rajajinagar Bangalore-560010 have changed my name to KATHYAYINI S, vide affidavit dated 24/03/2026 sworn before notary K.P.Ramesh.

I, Khusboo Jain, D/o Pradeep Jain, residing at Pride Pristine Apt, Ananth Nagar Ph-3, E-City Ph-2, Bangalore-560100 declare that Khusboo Jain and Khushboo Jain refer to same person, affidavit KA56276633604076X dated 27/09/2025.

I Hasham Ahamed Baig S/O. Makbool Ahamed Baig R/o No 10/20 2nd Floor 3rd Main Road Btm 1st Stage Opp. Maruthi Layout Bangalore 560029 Karnataka India. have changed my name to Hashim Ahmed Baig.

I, Lalita Hullannavar D/O Pakkeerappa W/O Shankarappa R/O H. No. 627/B, Maruti Nagar Naragund, Naragund Dist. Gadag (Karnataka) have changed my name to SIDDAVVA GAGGARI forever.

I, Swathi Tibrewal, daughter of Sunil Garg, residing at Bommanahalli, Dist: Bengaluru, Karnataka - 560068, have changed my name to Swathi Garg vide affidavit dated 20-Mar-2026.

I Kamlesh Kumar Kantilal #105/21 4th floor flat No:402 Kavi Lakshmisha Road V.V Puram B'lore-04 changed name to Kamlesh Kumar. Affi date : 23/3/26 Puttaraju.

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Sealed tenders are invited under two bid systems (Technical and Financial) from reputed security services with minimum of 3 years of experience in Hospitals / Medical Colleges to provide security services at CMC campuses.

Eligible agencies interested to participate can collect tender forms from the Office of the General Superintendent, Christian Medical College Vellore, Ida Scudder Road, Vellore **from 27th March 2026 to 8th April 2026** between 10 am to 4 pm along with a Demand Draft for Rs. 5000/- drawn in favour of CMC Vellore Association. Sealed envelope should be submitted on or before **11th April 2026** before 12.00 noon.

General Superintendent
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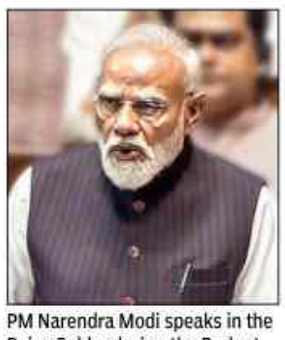
Israel-Iran war will be a major test for India: Modi

▶Continued from P 1

Modi reiterated that attacks on commercial ships and blockade of the Strait of Hormuz — the maritime conduit for oil and gas for India — was unacceptable, and emphasised India has condemned attacks on civilians, on civil infrastructure, and on energy and transport-related infrastructure.

He said India was making continuous diplomatic efforts to ensure safe passage of its ships in the prevailing situation. "Our goal is to restore peace in the region through dialogue and diplomacy. We have spoken with them about de-escalation and reopening the Strait of Hormuz," Modi said.

The PM said the situation would be a major test for the country and made a strong pitch for redoubling the effort for self-sufficiency in order to guard against contingencies. "90% of ships carrying supplies to India are foreign-owned and this is not a very happy situation," the PM said, as he referred to efforts during his tenures to overcome dependency on others for critical materials like active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs), and defence imports.



PM Narendra Modi speaks in the Rajya Sabha during the Budget Session in New Delhi on Tuesday

Modi sought cooperation from states to cushion the impact on the poor by ensuring regular supply, saying they would be affected the most during the crisis. "Therefore, it must be ensured that the benefits of the PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana reach them on time," he said.

"The fundamentals of our economy are strong, and the govt is closely monitoring the rapidly changing situation," he said. "I assure the people that the govt is alert, ready, and working with full seriousness on strategy, taking every necessary decision. The welfare of the people is paramount for us."

Safe passage of ships through the Strait is vital, says Modi

▶Continued from P 1

This was also the first conversation between the two leaders since they spoke in early Feb, after which Trump announced the agreement for a trade deal and lowered tariffs on India from 50% to 18%.

Trump and Modi spoke on a day the former seemed to have endorsed Pakistan's efforts to play the role of a mediator in the conflict. While Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif publicly offered to host talks, Trump shared a screenshot of the post on Truth Social.

"Received a call from President Trump and had a useful exchange of views on the situation in West Asia. India supports de-escalation and restoration of peace at the earliest.

Ensuring that the Strait of Hormuz remains open, secure and accessible is essential for the whole world," said Modi in a post on X, adding that they agreed to stay in touch regarding efforts towards peace and stability.

According to an Indian readout, Modi noted that safe passage of ships through the Strait is vital for global peace, stability and economic well-being.

Jaishankar had spoken to his counterpart Marco Rubio on Monday about the conflict, its likely impact on the international economy and India's energy security concerns.

Rohit thanks K'taka police for filing FIR

▶Continued from page 1

Seemanth Kumar Singh said: "Rohit requested to register a zero FIR seeking inquiry into the death. Since the Supreme Court has issued the guidelines stating zero FIRs can be registered anywhere in the country, we registered the same and transferred it to DGP Maharashtra through our DG and IGP since it is the proper channel." Singh clarified that the FIR was not registered based on court directive and it was done after Rohit appeared in person and lodged the complaint.

In Mumbai, Rohit spoke to reporters outside the state assembly and slammed the Mahayuti govt for failing to register an FIR in the **Ajit Pawar** plane crash case. He said he had to file a zero FIR in Karnataka as the police in Maharashtra did not register a case on his complaint. Rohit said he had consulted Congress leaders in Delhi who advised him to register a FIR in another state. He said an FIR had to be registered as there would be no investigation without an FIR.

Rohit said, "The investigation in Maharashtra into Ajit Pawar's accident is not proceeding properly. Leaders within Ajit Pawar's own party are having to issue reminder letters regarding the matter. Yet, even these are going unanswered. It remains entirely unclear what exactly the CID is doing. Over the past month and a half, attempts were made to register FIRs at various locations across Maharashtra (in Mumbai and Baramati); however, justice was not delivered," he said.

"I express my gratitude to the Karnataka police administration for registering the FIR and thereby taking steps to ensure justice for a Marathi manpower," Rohit said.

"We find it distressing that even the leaders within Ajit Dada's party have remained silent. This is, in fact, both laughable and unfortunate. It is possible that Jay Pawar (Ajit Pawar's son) is refraining from holding a press conference due to pressure from Sunil Tatkare and Praful Patel. If Jay Pawar is indeed striving to secure justice for his father, his efforts should be welcomed. I will not hold my own press conference regarding evidence in my possession until his press conference takes place. However, I cannot explain why the press conference—which was scheduled for last week—has still not been held to this day. Are those currently in power preventing him from holding the press conference?" Rohit Pawar asked.

Rohit urged CM Devendra Fadnavis, who also holds the home portfolio, and his deputies Eknath Shinde and Sunetra Pawar to ensure there is no further delay in the probe.

Meanwhile, in his complaint to the Bengaluru police, Rohit alleged that the ill-fated Bombardier Learjet 45 aircraft bearing registration mark VT-SSK and operated by VSR Ventures Private Limited ('VSR') was not airworthy. "The material available discloses systematic violations of aviation safety regulations, deliberate falsification of records, gross negligence in maintenance and operations, and a pattern of conduct that directly and foreseeably caused the deaths of those aboard," he said referring to the Jan 28 incident at Baramati.

"At the time of the crash, the aircraft had accumulated approximately 4,915 flight hours, leaving only about 85 hours before the mandatory engine Time Before Overhaul ('TBO') threshold of 5,000 hours was reached.

"Despite operating dangerously close to this limit, the aircraft was deployed for commercial operations, placing the crew and passengers at heightened risk of mechanical malfunction," he stated. Even visibility was not properly assessed, he alleged.

Person loses SC status after converting to any religion other than Buddhism & Sikhism

AmitAnand.Choudhary
@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Supreme Court on Tuesday said no person who professes a religion other than Hindu, Sikh or Buddhist shall be a member of Scheduled Caste. It held that a person from the Scheduled Caste community loses the status after converting to any religion other than Buddhism and Sikhism and cannot invoke Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

The court said that the bar under Clause 3 of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 is "categorical and absolute" and no person who professes a religion other than Hindu, Sikh or Buddhist shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste. It said conversion to any religion not specified in Clause 3 results in immediate and complete loss of Scheduled Caste status from the moment of conversion regardless of birth.

Recounting the legislative history, the bench noted that Clause 3, which was originally enacted in the year 1950, restricted Scheduled Caste status to persons professing the Hindu religion only but it was amended in 1956 to include persons professing the Sikh religion and it was extended to include persons professing the Buddhist religion in 1990.

The court upheld the order of Andhra Pradesh HC which had quashed a case under SC/ST(Prevention of Atrocities) Act on the ground that the complainant had embraced Christianity and cannot invoke the law.

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रोजगार अधिसूचना (EMPLOYMENT NOTIFICATION)

Applications from interested and eligible candidates are invited on prescribed format for filling up following **Non-Teaching** & **Teaching posts**.

S.No.	Post	Vacancies	Salary
01	Administrative-cum-Accounts Officer (Transfer on Deputation basis)	01	Pay Level 10 (As per 7th CPC) Rs. 56100 -177500
02	Assistant Lecturer-cum-Assistant Instructor (Direct Recruitment)	TOTAL = 03 (02-UR, 01-ST)	Pay Level 6 (As per 7th CPC) Rs. 35400-112400

Details information in respect of eligibility criteria in terms of essential qualifications and experiences, upper age limit, age relaxation along-with prescribed format of application can be referred & downloaded from websites **www.ihmhajipur.net.**

Last date of submission of Application along-with all Testimonials is within **45 days (till 5 PM)** from the date of publication of Employment Notification in Employment News / Rozgar Samachar.

Sd/- Principal / Secretary
Ref : IHM : Notification / 2026-3823 IHM Hajipur

44001/23/2526

ODISHA JOINT ENTRANCE EXAMINATION - 2026 (OJEE - 2026)

No: OJEE/116 DATE : 24.03.2026

NOTICE FOR EXTENSION OF THE LAST DATE FOR ONLINE APPLICATION FOR OJEE - 2026

This is for the information of all candidates, interested to apply for **Odisha Joint Entrance Examination (OJEE) – 2026, that the last date for registration and final submission of online application forms for OJEE - 2026, which was earlier notified as 22.03.2026, is extended till 29.03.2026 (11:59 PM).** (Final Submission means submission of application form including payment)

Candidates are advised to visit OJEE websites (**www.ojee.nic.in/ www.odishajee.com**), read the **'Information Brochure'** and the **'Instructions to fill On-line Application Form'**, which are available in the OJEE websites and submit their online Application Forms as soon as possible, without waiting till the last date.

Further, another three days, i.e., **30.03.2026 (11:00AM), 31.03.2026 and 01.04.2026 (till 11:59 PM)** will be provided to the candidates to correct*, if necessary, their application forms. For other details please visit OJEE website: **https://ojee.nic.in**

* Correction in the application form will be applicable to only successful submitted applications.

It may be noted that there will be no further extension of the registration / application period beyond this date.

Sd/-
CHAIRMAN,
OJEE Odisha
OIPR-44001/44026/1/25-26/0001

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Advt. No. RCB/01/2026/Recruitment/HR
Recruitment for the post of Finance Officer

Regional Centre for Biotechnology (RCB) invites applications from suitably qualified, dynamic, result-oriented, experienced and dedicated candidates for the post of Finance Officer in Pay level 13 (₹123100-215900). For other details, visit website **www.rcb.res.in**. Last date for receipt of online application is **08.05.2026.**

Controller of Administration

MAULANA AZAD NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
(An Institute of National Importance under Ministry of Education, Govt. of India)
BHOPAL-462003 (M.P.) INDIA

JOINT PH.D. ADMISSION NOTICE SESSION 2025-26

No/MANIT/Acad./2026/5073-1 Date: 24/03/2026

Applications are invited for the Joint Ph.D admission MANIT, Bhopal & IIT Jammu in the following Category:-

Full Time (FT)		No. of Seats
FT-Institute	With Institute Fellowship	*11

*against the identified areas.
For details visit Institute website www.manit.ac.in to fill application form visit https://online.manit.ac.in/admission
The last date for receiving duly completed application form is 15th April 2026. DIRECTOR

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(Ministry of Textiles - Govt. of India)
Bengaluru - 560 068

Advt.No.CSB/NSSO/Seri.Asst/2026-27 Date: 25.03.2026

National Silkworm Seed Organization (NSSO), Central Silk Board, Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India invites online applications for engagement of **Sericulture Assistants** (65 Posts) on purely contractual basis (one year) in CSB-NSSO units across Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand & West Bengal. For details & online application, visit: **https://csb.gov.in/job-opportunities**

Sd/-
DIRECTOR
CBC 41109/12/0027/2526

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF PSYCHIATRY
KANKE, RANCHI-834006, JHARKHAND

A.12028/02/2023-Estt/820 Dated:24/03/2026

WALK IN INTERVIEW

It is proposed to fill up the following Group 'A' posts at Central Institute of Psychiatry, Kanke, Ranchi on contract basis for a period of one year or till the post is filled up on regular basis whichever is earlier. Accordingly, applications are invited from the eligible and desirous candidates fulfilling the qualifications for the posts mentioned below. Applications on plain paper either typed or handwritten along with two passport size photographs, photocopies of the certificates of educational qualifications, experiences etc., may be submitted to the undersigned on or before **04.04.2026**. After submission of application candidates have to turn up along with their original certificates on the date of interview. No interview letter will be issued separately.

The interview shall be held at Central Institute of Psychiatry, Kanke, Ranchi-834006, Jharkhand, on 04.04.2026 at 09.30 a.m.

Sl. No.	Name of post	Consolidated pay per month in 1st year	No. of post
1.	Asst. Prof. of Psychiatry	Rs.1,23,500/-	15 (UR-8, EWS-1, OBC-3, SC-2, ST-1)
2.	Asst. Prof. of Neurology	Rs.1,23,500/-	03 (UR-3)
3.	Asst. Prof. of Neurosurgery	Rs.1,23,500/-	02 (UR-2)
4.	Asst. Prof. of Anesthesia	Rs.1,23,500/-	02 (UR-2)
5.	Asst. Prof. of Radio-diagnosis	Rs.1,23,500/-	02 (UR-2)
		TOTAL	24

Note:
1. Applications may be submitted either by Speed Post to **"The Director, Central Institute of Psychiatry, Kanke, Ranchi-834006, or via email at director@cipranchi.nic.in."**
2. Details of qualifications and age limit of the above posts are available on our website **www.cipranchi.nic.in**

Sd/-Director

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BRICS INDIA 2026

AFFORDING AN OPPORTUNITY OF HEARING AGAINST THE PROPOSED ASSESSMENT OF CONTRIBUTION

Attention is called to the proposed assessment of ESI contributions. A final opportunity for a Personal Hearing is being provided for the employer listed in column No. 02. They must make their submission or have their Authorized Representative do so before the Authorized Officer and submit all relevant records on or before the date specified in Column No. 05 as they have failed to utilize earlier afforded opportunities.

Sl No	Name address of the Units & Code number	Name/Address of the Principal Employer	Notice Date and Period and amount	Final Hearing Date Fixed Now
1	M/S RANIS KITCHEN 53000407840001101	Shri/Smt. Gurram Ramakrishna Usharani C/o. RANIS KITCHEN, 112/8, Bull Temple road, Bangalore – 560019.	C-18 (Adhoc) dt.17-03-2023 for Rs. 9702 for the period 07/20-03/22	Dated 08.04.2026
2	M/S ADITHI ENTERPRISES 53000411940001001	M/s. ADITHI ENTERPRISES, No. 62, Hospital Colony, Ramanagar, Karnataka, Pin code - 562109.	C-18 (Adhoc) dt.13. 03. 2023 for Rs. 28088 for the period 02/18-03/22	Dated 08.04.2026
3	M/S YESH HR CONSULTANCY SERVICES PVT LTD 53000428410000999	M/s. YESH HR CONSULTANCY No.1022, Dr. Rajkumar Road, 4th Block, Rajajinagar, Bangalore-56001	C-18 (Adhoc) dt .22.04.2024 for Rs. 23793 for the period 03/19-03/23	Dated 08.04.2026
4	M/S MAX SECURITY FORCE 53000433090001018	M/s. MAX SECURITY FORCE No.4003, 1st Floor, 1st A Main, 7th Cross, Subramanyanagara, Gayathrinagar, Bangalore-560021	C-18 (Adhoc) dt.07-08-2024 for Rs. 474012 for the period 09/19-02/24	Dated 08.04.2026
5	M/S K B SHIVANNA 53000437470001019	M/s. K B SHIVANNA Kuruburu Village, Milandanahalli Post, Chinthamani Taluk, Kolar District-563125	C-18 (Adhoc) dt.05-09-2022 for Rs. 277200 for the period 07/17-03/21	Dated 08.04.2026
6	M/S MANJUNATHA ENTERPRISES 53000441510001006	M/s. MANJUNATHA ENTERPRISES No.11, 1st Floor, Hosakere Halli Road, Opp Kavika Factory, Byataranapura, Mysore Road-560028	C-18 (Adhoc) dt.22-04-2024 for Rs. 304920 for the period 07/19-03/22	Dated 08.04.2026
7	M/S EXPIUS INFOTECH PVT LTD 53000446550000999	M/s EXPIUS INFOTECH PRIVATE LIMITED NO 9 3RD MAIN 3RD CROSS 2ND FLOOR MATADAHALLI R T NAGAR BANGALORE-560032	C-18 (Adhoc) dt.04-05-2024 for Rs. 16170 for the period 09/20-03/22	Dated 08.04.2026
8	M/S EXPIUS INFOTECH PVT LTD 53000446550000999	M/s EXPIUS INFOTECH PRIVATE LIMITED NO 9 3RD MAIN 3RD CROSS 2ND FLOOR MATADAHALLI R T NAGAR BANGALORE-560032	C-18 (Adhoc) dt.04-05-2024 for Rs. 16170 for the period 09/20-03/22	Dated 08.04.2026
9	M/S ROYAL INDIAN SECURITY SERVICE 53000462830001018	M/s. ROYAL INDIAN SECURITY SERVICE, NO.09, BINNY SQUARE, B-1806, MAGADI ROAD,OPP. ANGALAPARAMESHWARI TEMPLE, BANGALORE - 560023.Email - royalindian09@gmail.com Phone No- 9845303100	C-18 (Adhoc) dt.06-06-2023 for Rs. 17499 for the period 04/19-03/22	Dated 08.04.2026
10	M/S NEW SAGAR ENTERPRISES 53000463000001001	M/s New Sagar Enterprises No.1, Ground Floor, 6th Cross, HBCS Layout, 2nd Stage,, Chandra Layout,Bengaluru - 560040	C-18 (Adhoc) dt.21. 10. 2w022 for Rs. 28644 for the period 09/19-03/22	Dated 08.04.2026
11	53000300060001099 & GENIE HOUSE KEEPING SERVICES	NO.30, 11TH CROSS, SADASHIVA TEMPLE ROAD,R S PALYA, M S NAGAR POST, BANGALORE-560033	C-18 (Adhoc),dt. 23-06-2022, Rs. 68030, for the period 6/17-3/22,	Dated 13.04.2026
12	53000334360001099 & ST STAFFING SOLUTIONS	200, 3RD FLOOR, SADATH COURT, 5 &, MAGRATH ROAD, BANGALORE-560025	DATE OF C-18 (ADHOC) , dt. 29-11-2022, Rs.217083 for the period 10/17-3/22,	Dated 13.04.2026
13	53000345440001018 & C S R SECURITY SERVICES	#665,6TH CROSS,BRUNDAVAN NAGAR,NEARDOBHIGHAT, BANGALORE-560050	DATE OF C-18(ADHOC) 29- DATE OF C-18 (ADHOC), dt. 11-2022, Rs.102218, for the period 1/18-10/21	Dated 13.04.2026
14	53000345790000999 & NAG INCENCE & DHOOP CO	29/1A,KONANAKUNTE, NEW BANK COLONY,ANJANAPUR, BANGALORE-560062	DATE OF C-18 (ADHOC), dt.28-12-2022, Rs.371102, for the eriod 4/18-3/22	Dated 13.04.2026
15	53000352320001401 &RADOCS ASSOCIATES IMAGING PVT LTD	Sai Ram Towers,No.24, 5th Main Road, amarajpet BANGALORE-560018	DATE OF C-18(ADHOC) dt.29-03-2022, Rs.38808 for the period 2/20-3/21	Dated 13.04.2026
16	53700523150011009-Happy Homess Consultancy Pvt Ltd	Sub Unit Address : Flat No.32 Lakshmi Nilyam, 13TH Main Road, CQAL Layout , Bangalore 560092, Address of Main Unit : Flat 101 & 102 Gabhati Hermitage sector-1, MVP Colony, Vishakhapatnam 17	Notice-C-18 Adhoc (D.O.I), Amount & Period, 26/08/2024, Rs.2,45,322/- (08/2019-06/2024)	Dated 08.04.2026
17	53510897210011001 -Power Links	Address of Sub Unit : D no.7-15/2, 9th main. 5th Cross, Muniyappa, Layout Hongasandra, Bangalore 560068 Address of Main Unint : No.10, EVR, Street West, Banu Nagar, Pudur, Ambattur Chennai 600053.	Notice-C-18 Adhoc (D.O.I), Amount & Period, dt. 08/08/ 2024 Rs. 8,17,740/- (08/2019-06/2024)	Dated 08.04.2026
18	SUVIKRAM PLASTEX PVT LTD 53-00-001502-000-0304	#16, 4th Main Industrial Town West of Chord Road, Rajajingar 560010	DATE OF C-18 (ADHOC) 12.07.22, Rs. 4873523, Amount & Period :02/18 03/22	Dated 08.04.2026
19	ASPA PRIVATE LIMITED 53-00-001688-000-0404	SURESH N.SHETTY JANAPUSHPAM,NO. 386A, 20TH MAIN ROAD 11TH CROSS,J.P.NAGAR 2ND PHASE,BANGALORE-560078	DATE OF C-18 (ADHOC) 24.03.25 Amount & Period,:03/20 01/25 Rs. 44132	Dated 08.04.2026
20	Southern Machine Tools 53-00-002337-000-0605	R. SUNDERA MURTHY No.27, 16th Cross Road, 4th Temple Street, Malleswaram, Bangalore - 560003	DATE OF C-18 (ADHOC) 18.08.22 Amount & Period,:04/20 03/22 Rs. 44352	Dated 08. 04 2026
21	Hotel Hemala Pvt. Ltd 53-00-003009-000-1101	K M Sirajuddin 6/6 1 st cross Bangiyappa Garden, Shanthinagar Bangalore 560025	DATE OF C-18 (ADHOC) 17.12.21 Amount & Period,:12/16 03/21 Rs. 262086	Dated 08.04.2026
22	Measurement Systems(P) Ltd.,53-00-003867-000-1002	No.14/2, Kadabagere, Magadi Main Road, Bangalore North 560001	DATE OF C-18 (ADHOC) 31.01.22 Amount & Period,:12/16 03/21 Rs. 262086	Dated 08.04.2026
23	N.S.P. Electronics (P)Ltd. 53-00-004609-000-0602	52/1,52/3,53/1,Veerana Halli, Virgonagar Indl.Estate, Bangalore. 560049	DATE OF C-18 (ADHOC) 20.12.23 Amount & Period,:04/19 03/23 Rs. 997375	Dated 08.04.2026
24	R K ENTERPRISES 53-00-011113-000-0009	Suresh Poojary F 902,9th floor, Golden Grand Apartment Tumlur Road ,Ypr,Blr-22	DATE OF C-18 (ADHOC) 01.02.22 Amount & Period,:06/18 03/21 Rs. 253003	Dated 08.04.2026
25	Pawan Airways (P) ltd., 53-00-011110-000-1001	Madev Gopal Maheshwari No.542,10th "A" Main, 38 Cross, Jayanagar,5th Block, Bangalore-11	DATE OF C-18 (ADHOC) 30.05.25 Amount & Period,:06/20 03/25 Rs. 156415	Dated 08.04.2026
26	Srishyla Enterprises, 53-00-014743-000-1001	C.Mallaradhya No.232/1, 2nd "A" Main B T.K.T. Gowda Layout Ittamadu, BSK 3rd Stage 560085	C-18 (Adhoc) dt.04-05-2024 for Rs. 16170 for the period 09/20-03/22	Dated 08.04.2026
27	Deepam Detective And Security Services 53-00-009673-000-1018	Miniswamy No.112,5th Cross,JAIjAWAN Nagar,M.S.NagaPost,Bangalore:560033	DATE OF C-18(ADHOC) 27.11.24 Amount & Period,:12/19 09/24 Rs. 214368	Dated 08.04.2026
28	Prakruthi Creations, 53-00-014601-000-1002	Narendran 25,Prasant Extension, Whitefield, Bangalore. 560066	DATE OF C-18 (ADHOC) 27.11.24 Amount & Period,:12/19 09/24 Rs. 214368	Dated 08.04.2026
29	Hotel Regency Park 53-00-016264-000-0009	Jagadish Shetty 3826, Mariappa circle Kammanahalli main Bangalore 560001	DATE OF C-18 (ADHOC) 25.10.24 Amount & Period,:04/21 07/21Rs. 3696	Dated 08.04.2026
30	BALAJI TRADERS 53-00-007201-000-0199	ABHISHEK CHATURVEDI NO. 121/30, SHASHISADAN, 4TH MAIN ROAD, GANGANAGAR	DATE OF C-18(ADHOC) 30.05.25 Amount & Period,:06/20 04/25 Rs. 68376	Dated 08.04.2026
31	M/s AARRCON ENGINEE ESIC Code: 53-00-050810 -000-0999	Shri/Smt Rajeev Venkatraman Hegde M/s AARRCON ENGINEERS, No. 277, Saraswathinagar, Vijayanagar, Bengaluru-560040. Mobile: 9448224236 Email: aarrconenggbng@gmail.com	C-18 (Adhoc) dt: 08.10. 2025 Amount: 76,230 Period: 01/21–03 /22	Dated 08.04.2026
32	M/s YOGI ELECTRICALS, ESIC Code: 53-00-053030-000-0999	Shri/Smt Shanmugam Yogaraj M/s YOGI ELECTRICALS, 2nd Floor, No. 54, K No. 1085, 22/1, 6th Cross, Mangammanapalya, Bommanahalli, CMC Hosur Road, Bengaluru-560068 Email: stonetax12@gmail.com	C-18 (Adhoc) dt: 09.09. 2025 Amount: 1,33,980 Period: 09/22–04/258	Dated 08.04.2026
33	M/s HAPPYLOCATE RELOCATION SERVICES PVT LTD, ESIC Code: 53-00-053051-000-1008	Shri/Smt Ajay Tiwari M/s HAPPYLOCATE RELOCATION SERVICES PVT LTD, 4th Floor, No. 146/6, Opp Drum Factory, Thanisandra Main Road, Nagavara, Bengaluru-560077 Email: ajay.tiwari@happylocate.com	C-18 (Adhoc) dt: 29.08. 2025 Amount: 2,68,013 Period: 11/22–04/25	Dated 08.04.2026
34	M/s M A M SOLUTIONS, ESIC Code: 53-00-048585-000-1099	Shri/Smt Ranjit Kuri & Shri/Smt Jayanna Madhumathi M/s M A M SOLUTIONS, No. 774, 1st Floor, 13th Cross, 1st Stage, Chandra Layout, Nagarabhavi-560072 Email: mamsolutions2019@gmail.com	C-18 (Adhoc) dt: 10.09. 2024 Amount: 2,53,355 Period: 12/19–06/24	Dated 08.04.2026

Please be advised that if the opportunity for a personal hearing on the specified date is not utilized, an appropriate order under Section 125 of the Code on Social Security-2020 (erstwhile Sec. 45A of ESI Act, 1948) will be issued, ex-parte based on the merits of each case.

Date: 24.03.2026
Place: Banglore

-Sd/-
Authorized Officer

Karnataka has 27 pending NIA cases; Delhi tops list with 59

▶ Continued from page 1

The advocates general of 17 states, where more than 10 cases are pending, expressing the willingness of each state to avail of the central funding to set up exclusive NIA courts. "The states must identify how many such exclusive special courts are required to be established for trial of NIA-investigated cases on a day-to-day basis with a categorical commitment that each trial must be completed in all circumstances within a year. The prosecuting agency, Centre and states, as the case may be, must take steps to appoint a dedicated public prosecutor, and notify special PP where sufficient PPs are not available in the cadre, to each of the special courts," it said.

Delhi has the highest number of NIA cases pending at 59, followed by J&K – 38, Assam, Kerala and Gujarat – 33 each, Punjab and West Bengal – 32 each, Jharkhand – 28, Karnataka -27, TN – 23, Telangana – 22 and Maharashtra 21. Since the opinion of the HCs is required for some of the issues relating to establishment of special NIA courts, the registrars general will present their views before the court during the next date of hearing, it said.

Bengal was a case apart in SIR exercise, says top court

▶ Continued from page 1

The court stuck to its view that Bengal was a case apart in the SIR exercise despite advocate Kalyan Banerjee saying the 'logical discrepancy' ground was not applied in other states.

"A recent article said except West Bengal, in every other state governed by different political parties, the SIR has gone on smoothly," it said. SC had exercised its extraordinary powers under Article 142 of the Constitution to deploy judicial officers from West Bengal, Jharkhand and Odisha, under the supervision of the Calcutta HC Chief Justice, as electoral officers to adjudicate claims for inclusion in the list of those names under 'logical discrepancy' or 'unmapped' categories.

Appearing for state, advocates Shyam Divan, Kalyan Banerjee and Menaka Guruswamy said of the 60 lakh claims, only 27 lakh have been adjudicated by the officers. The balance appears unlikely to be decided before Apr 6, the last date of nomination for the first phase of polling on Apr 23, and Apr 9, the last date of nomination for constituencies going to polls in second phase on Apr 29, they said.

SC grants full pension to women denied permanent commission

Move To Benefit Hundreds Of SSC Officers

Dhananjay.Mahapatra
@timesofindia.com

Denial of PC was not merely the outcome of individual assessments, but the consequence of a systemic framework rooted in assumptions that entrenched disadvantages in career progression, the SC said

New Delhi: In what will benefit hundreds of women short service commission officers, Supreme Court on Tuesday said arbitrariness in assessment of their ACRs, written at a time when they were ineligible for permanent commission (PC), resulted in unfair denial of PC and ordered the armed forces to pay full pension to them.

Six years after the landmark judgment making women short service commission officers (WSSCOs) eligible for PC, a bench of CJI Surya Kant and Justices Ujjal Bhuyan and N K Singh said, "ACRs of appellant-SSCWOs were authored with the assumption that they would never undergo any substantive career progression, owing to their ineligibility for PC for the initial 10 years of service."

Writing separate judgments for WSSCOs in Army, Navy and IAF, CJI Kant said, "Since the avenue for PC was opened to them much later, this presumption undermined the entire assessment of their 'suitability' for any career progression undertaken prior to that and, thus, adversely affected their overall merit in the consideration for PC. "We find that denial of PC to WSSCOs was not merely the outcome of individual assessments, but the consequence of a systemic framework rooted in assumptions that entrenched disadvantages in career progression." The top court bench made the comment after accepting majority of the submissions by amicus curiae and senior advocate Rekha Palli.

Invoking its extraordinary powers under Article 142 of the Constitution, the SC said the women SSCOs who have approached the apex court and who have been released from service during pendency of the litigation, "shall be deemed to have completed substantive qualifying service of 20 years and shall be entitled to pension and all consequential benefits, except arrears of pay, on the basis that they have completed such minimum service".

"The pension shall be fixed on the basis of the date of completion of deemed service of 20 years, but arrears thereof, if any, shall be paid to the WSSCOs only with effect from Jan 1, 2025," the top court said but excluded women SSCOs in Judge Advocate General and Army Engineering Corps (AEC) from this benefit saying they were eligible for PC since 2010.

The bench further directed, "All WSSCOs who are continuing in service by virtue of SC orders dated May 9 and May 19 last year, and who have fulfilled the minimum cut-off grade of 60% in the regular selection boards held in 2020 and 2021, shall be entitled to permanent commission, subject to their meeting the medical criteria and on receiving disciplinary and vigilance clearance."

Teacher, 70, held for sexual assault

Agra: A 70-year-old Urdu teacher at a madrassa in Muzaffarnagar district was arrested on Monday after a video surfaced, purportedly showing him sexually assaulting a 13-year-old male student inside a classroom. According to officials, the crime happened on Sept 7, 2024, and the assault was secretly recorded on a mobile phone by another boy. The video began circulating on social media only recently. TNN

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Dr. MANMOHAN SINGH BENGALURU CITY UNIVERSITY

Office of the Registrar, Central College Campus, Dr. B.R Ambedkar Veedhi, Bengaluru – 560 001. E-mail: registrar@bcu.ac.in

Tender No: BCU/2025-26/SE0007/CALL-2 Date: 24.03.2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION (Call-2) (Through KPPP portal only)

NAME OF THE WORK	Empanelment of Government Project Management Consultant for Construction, Special Repair and Renovation works at Dr. Manmohan Singh Bengaluru City University, Bengaluru, Karnataka
EMD	**Rs. 3,00,000/-**
LAST DATE FOR QUERIES	**28-03-2026 Up to 16.00 hrs.**
LAST DATE FOR SUBMISSION OF TENDER	**04-04-2026 Up to 16.00 hrs.**
OPENING OF THE TECHNICAL BID	**06-04-2026 at 16.30 hrs.**

Note : Payment of Tender processing fee and EMD amount as per E-procurement Portal.

DIPR/CP/SHIRDI SAI/6435/2025-26 Sd/- REGISTRAR

RAIL WHEEL FACTORY
Yelahanka, BANGALORE - 560 064
Website: www.rwf.indianrailways.gov.in

Tender Notice No. RWF/S/P2/20/2025-26 Dated 23/03/2026

On behalf of the President of India, the Principal Chief Materials Manager invites Electronic Open Tender for supply of the following item, on the Indian Railways e-portal www.ireps.gov.in.
Tender Number and Brief Item Description : P2255913B, Magnesia Spinel Brick Set for Ladle Lining as per RWF Specification. (Developmental Tender). **Quantity :** 25 Sets. **Tender Closing Date and Time :** 09/04/2026, 14:00 hrs.

TENDER NOTICE NO.RWF/S/P1/020/ 2025-26 dt:24.03.2026

Tender Number and Brief Item Description : P1261178, Tin coated Spiral machine Taps. **Quantity :** 1400 Nos. **Due Date :** 10/04/2026.
Tender details can be viewed on our website www.rwf.indianrailways.gov.in or www.ireps.gov.in. The tender documents and the corrigendum to the Tender if any, will be available on the portal only.

Principal Chief Materials Manager

RAJASTHAN RAJYA VIDYUT PRASARAN NIGAM LIMITED
NIB NO. 42/2025-26

BID is invited in prescribed format from Bidders registered in AA class in RVPN (Civil) or AA class/equivalent class in other Government Department/ Central/ other state and their undertakings in the O/o Superintending Engineer (Civil) RVPN Jaipur in NIB No. 42/2025-26 All information regarding BID is available on http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in, www.rvpn.co.in and http: // sppp.raj.nic.in.

UBN :- VPN2526WLO803467 (1)
Raj.Samwad/C/25/23121 RRVPN/TR-7445/2026 **Superintending Engineer (CIVIL) Jaipur**

KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
No.2, 2/1 and 2/3, Kalidasa Marg, 1st Main Road, Gandhinagar
Bengaluru - 560 009. Phone No. 080-22265383, website: www.kiadb.in

No. IADB/ENGG/ETND-EP-30/1862/2025-26 Date: 24.03.2026

SHORT TERM NOTICE INVITING TENDER
(Through GOK Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Only)

Item rate Tender are invited as per the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act 1999 and Rules 2000 through electronic procurement from eligible Contractors registered in KCEI who have got adequate financial resources & sufficient past experience for the following work as per the schedule given below:

Name of the Work : Re-conditioning, Operation and Annual Maintenance of Streetlights at Basavakalyana, Humanabhadh Industrial Area, Bidar District. (2nd Call).

The last date and time of receipt of tender is : **08.04.2026** upto **4.00 pm.**

Applicants May Download Bidding Documents from the Karnataka Public Procurement Portal **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in.**

Sd/-
DIPR/CP/6433/NR/2025-26 **Chief Engineer-2, KIADB Bengaluru**

BENGALURU SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT LIMITED
Office of the Deputy General Manager-3, 1st Floor, BBMP Building, Thimmaiah Road, Vasanth Nagar, Bengaluru-560052.

No. DGM-3/BSWML/Tend/ 22/2025-26 Date: 24.03.2026

INVITATION FOR SHORT TERM TENDER (IFT) (Through GOK KPPP only)

The Deputy General Manager-3, Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Limited on behalf of the Managing Director, BSWML, Bengaluru invites tender from eligible tenderers for the services mentioned in the table below. The tenderers may submit tenders for services through KPP portal of the Government of Karnataka **(viz. https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in).**

SL No	Name of the services	Estimate amount (Rs. In Lakhs)	Duration	EMD Amount in Rs.
1	**Package-1:** Conducting 3 Large Scale Workshops on Swachh Survekshan, Solid Waste Management and implementation of effective waste Management and 2 National level Workshops on Institutionalizing Best Practices under Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) U-2.0.Call-3.	318.00	9 Months	4,77,000.00
2	**Package-2:** Providing Training and Capacity Building for 30% of the Staff including Executive, Technical Executive, Technical, Supervisory and Pourakarmika, drivers and helpers staffs across themes of Solid Waste Management, Sanitation and Used Water Management under Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) U-2.0. - Call-2.	279.60	3 Months	4,19,400.00
3	**Package-3:** Providing Training and Capacity Building for 35% of the Staff including Executive, Technical Executive, Technical, Supervisory and Pourakarmika, drivers and helpers staffs across themes of Solid Waste Management, Sanitation and Used Water Management under Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) U-2.0. - Call-2.	349.00	3 Months	5,23,500.00
4	**Package-4:** Providing Training and Capacity Building for 35% of the Staff including Executive, Technical Executive, Technical, Supervisory and Pourakarmika, drivers and helpers staffs across themes of Solid Waste Management, Sanitation and Used Water Management under Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) U-2.0. - Call-2.	349.00	3 Months	5,23,500.00
5	**Package-5:** Conducting Advanced Level Training for 50% of the Staff including Executive, Technical, Supervisory and Pourakarmika, drivers and helpers across themes of Solid Waste Management, Sanitation and Used Water Management under Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) U-2.0. - Call-2.	489.30	6 Months	7,34,000.00
6	**Package-6:** Conducting Advanced Level Training for 50% of the Staff including Executive, Technical, Supervisory and Pourakarmika, drivers and helpers across themes of Solid Waste Management, Sanitation and Used Water Management under Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) U-2.0. - Call-2.	489.30	6 Months	7,34,000.00
7	**Package-7:** Providing Refresher Training for 50% of the Staff including Executive, Technical and Pourakarmika staffs across themes of Solid Waste Management, Sanitation and Used Water Management under Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) U-2.0. - Call-2.	488.60	9 Months	7,32,900.00
8	**Package-8:** Providing Refresher Training for 50% of the Staff including Executive, Technical and Pourakarmika staffs across themes of Solid Waste Management, Sanitation and Used Water Management under Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) U-2.0. - Call-2.	488.60	9 Months	7,32,900.00

Calendar of Events: (1) Last date to upload pre-bid queries: **26.03.2026 upto 15.00 Hrs. in KPP Portal. (2)** Pre bid meeting: **27.03.2026 at 15.00 Hrs** at the office of CE & CGM-2 (Tech), BSWML, Thimmaiah Road, Vasanthnagar, Bangalore. **(3)** Last date for submission of the bids: **01.04.2026 upto 16.00 Hrs. (4)** Date of opening of Technical bid on : **02.04.2026 at 16.30 Hrs. (5)** Date of opening of Financial bids to be notified to technically qualified bidders.

Sd/-
DIPR/CP/6434/SHIRDI SAI/2025-26 **Deputy General Manager-3, BSWML.**

PFC CONSULTING LIMITED
(A wholly owned subsidiary of PFC Limited)
Regd. Office: First Floor, "Urjanidhi", 1, Barakhamba Lane, Connaught Place, New Delhi – 110001, (India) Fax : 011-23443990, Website: www.pfcclindia.com

GLOBAL INVITATION (THROUGH E-BIDDING ONLY)
FOR SELECTION OF TRANSMISSION SERVICE PROVIDER ON BUILD, OWN, OPERATE AND TRANSFER (BOOT) BASIS FOR INTER-STATE TRANSMISSION PROJECTS

PFC Consulting Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Power Finance Corporation Limited (A Government of India Undertaking), invites proposals for setting up of transmission projects on Build, Own, Operate and Transfer (BOOT) basis following single stage two envelope process of "Request for Proposal" (RFP).

Interested bidders may refer to the RFP notification and RFP documents available on the website **https://www.mstcecommerce.com** and **https://www.pfcclindia.com.**

The Bidders may obtain the RFP documents on all working days between 10:30 hrs (IST) and 16:00 hrs (IST) **from 25.03.2026 to one working day prior to bid submission for the projects mentioned below** on payment of a non-refundable fee of Rs. 5,00,000/- or USD 7,000 plus applicable GST @18% from 9th Floor, Wing – A, Statesman House, Connaught Place, New Delhi - 110001, Tel.: 91-11-23443996; Fax: 91-11-23443990; e-mail: **pfccl.itp@pfcindia.com**. The RFP documents can also be downloaded from **https://www.mstcecommerce.com** and **https://www.pfcclindia.com,** however, in such case, interested party can submit Response to RFP only on submission of non-refundable fee of Rs. 5,00,000/- or USD 7,000 plus applicable GST @18% separately. The survey report and clarification to RFP documents shall be issued to those bidders, who have obtained/ purchased RFP documents by paying requisite fee at least one working day prior to bid submission date. Bidders should regularly visit website to keep themselves updated regarding clarifications/ amendments/ time extensions etc., if any. The important timelines in this regard are as follows:

S. No.	Name of Transmission Scheme	Last Date for seeking clarifications (dd/mm/yyyy)	Last Date for submission of response to RFP (dd/mm/yyyy)	Date of opening of Response to RFP (dd/mm/yyyy)
1	Common Transmission System for evacuation of power from Lakadia (Phase-II: 7.5GW), Jam Khambhaliya (Phase-II: 5.5GW) and Jamnagar (Phase-I: 1GW) - Part-A	14/04/2026	29/05/2026 up to 15:00 hrs (IST)	29/05/2026 up to 15:30 hrs (IST)

Note: PFC Consulting Limited reserves the right to cancel or modify the process without assigning any reason and without any liability. This is not an offer.

Bid Process Coordinator: PFC CONSULTING LTD. (A wholly owned subsidiary of PFC Ltd.) (A Govt. of India Undertaking)
An Initiative of: Ministry of Power, Government of India
Initiative Partner: Central Electricity Authority

34001/264/2526

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER ELECTRICAL CIRCLE (R&B) NIRMAN SOUDHA BHUBANESWAR
E-mail : seec.bbsr2010@gmail.com
Bid Identification No. S.E.E.C (R&B)38/2025-26
No. 1206 /Date 23.03.2026

The Superintending Engineer, Electrical Circle (R&B) Odisha, Bhubaneswar on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bids for E.I. works which are to be received through online bidding, double cover system as detailed in : **https://tendersorissa.gov.in**. The details of bid documents will be available in the above website from dt.26.03.2026 at 05.00 P.M. to dt.10.04.2026 up to 05.00 P.M. The bidders must possess compatible Digital Signature Certificate of Class II or III. Bids received online shall be opened dt.13.04.2026 at 11.30 A.M. in the Office of the Superintending Engineer, Electrical Circle (R&B) Odisha, Bhubaneswar. Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal **www.tendersorissa.gov.in**. Addendum / Corrigendum, if required, will be available only in the Website.

Sd/-
OIPR - 34001/34006/1/25-26/0027 **Superintending Engineer Electrical Circle (R&B) Odisha, BBSR**

25001/350/2526

By E_Mail/e-Despatch
E_MailID:serw_balasore@yahoo.in
Ph-No-06782/260318
Balia, Balasore

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, BALASORE
"e" Procurement Notice for Road Work
Identification No.- Online Tender- Road N.C.B. No. 62 for 2025-26
Letter No. 1457 Date. 17/03/2026

1. Name of the work : **MMSY-TRIP & MMSY -DRR Road**
2. Total No. of work : **11 Nos. of work.**
3. Estimated Cost : As per annexure
4. Eligible Class of Contractor : As per annexure.
5. Period of Completion : As per annexure.
6. Other details :

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender On-line for bidding From	Availability of tender On-line for bidding To	Last Date & Time of seeking Tender Clarification	Date & Time of Opening of Tender in O/O S. E. R.W. Circle, Balasore Technical Bid	Date & Time of Opening of Tender in O/O S. E. R.W. Circle, Balasore Financial Bid
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Balasore	NCB No.:62 of 2025-26	30.03.2026 at 11.00 A.M	15.04.2026 up to 5.00 P.M.	13.04.2026 up to 5.00 P.M.	16.04.2026 at 11.00 A.M.	**Will be intimated later**

- **Further details can be seen from the website: www.tendersodisha.gov.in**

Sd/-
Chief Construction Engineer, R.W. Circle, Balasore
OIPR-25001/25105/1/25-26/0007

13001/777/2526

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Invitation for Bids

Bid Identification No. 176 /EM/BDA/2025-26 **Date: 23/03/2026**

Engineer Member, BDA on behalf of Bhubaneswar Development Authority, Bhubaneswar invites percentage rate bids in double cover system in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for civil works as mentioned below :

1. Name of works : Improvement of main road & other peripheral works at Maa Sikhar Chandi Temple, Patia, Bhubaneswar
2. Total No. of works : 01 (one) No.
3. Amount put to tender : Rs. 2.31 Crore
4. Class of Contractor : 'B' & 'A' class
5. Period of Completion : 06 (Six) Calendar months
6. Cost of Bid Documents : Rs. 10000.00 + 18% GST Rs. 11800.00 (**Online transfer by the last date & time for receipt of bids**)
7. Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) : 1% of estimated cost put to tender. (**Online transfer by the last date & time for receipt of bids**)
8. Availability of Tender : **From 26.03.2026 to 5.30 PM of 15.04.2026 https://tendersodisha.gov.in.**
9. Date of opening of Tender : **Dt. 16.04.2026 at 11.30 AM**
10. Place of opening of Tender : O/o - Engineer Member, BDA, Bhubaneswar.

Further details can be seen from the website: **https://tendersodisha.gov.in**. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.

Sd/-
Engineer Member, BDA, Bhubaneswar
OIPR-13001/13033/1/25-26/0053

Govt. of Karnataka
Office of the Executive Engineer, Panchayath Raj Engineering Division, Vijayapur
Tel.No:08352-277816, Fax.No:08352-277817,
E-Mail:zpebjp9@yahoo.co.in
ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ:ಕಾಇಂ/ಪಂ.ರಾ.ಇ.ವಿ/ಟೆಜ/ಇಪ್ರಾ/ಟೆಂಡರ್/2025–26/4074 ದಿನಾಂಕ:20.03.2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION (Two Cover System)

Executive Engineer, PRE Division, Vijayapura has invited e-tender for the works under the Various Grant scheme for the year 2024-25 Work Indent No. RDPR/2025-26/BD/WORK_INDENT25701, 25689 & 25683) **for General Bidders,** (RDPR/2025-26/BD/WORK_INDENT25678 & 24162) **for ST Bidders,** Rs. 17.70Lakhs to Rs.68.10 Lakhs Total 5 work vide Tender Publication No.4074 Date: 20.03.2026. Last Date for submission of Tender is 30.03.2026 time 5.30 PM.

For more information about the tender, the information can be collected at the website www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in or visit the office of the said Division during office hours.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, P.R.E. Division, Vijayapur
ಪಾಇಕಂರಗ್ರ/ವಿಜಯಪುರ/831/ಕೆಎಸ್ಎಂಎ/2025–26

TUMKUR URBAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Belagumba Road, Tumkur - 572103.
Ph: 0816-2272280, Fax: 0816-2255761.
email: tudatmk2009@yahoo.co.in; website: tuda.co.in.

No. TUDA/Tech-AEE/Badminton Court-01/2025-26/3645(a) Date: 24-03-2026

Tender Notification

Tenders are invited from eligible civil contractors for the works as per Karnataka Public Transparency Ordinance 1999-2000 and as per, kw-3, Standard Bid Document and latest amended provision through e-procurement portal of Government of Karnataka Web Address **(https//kppp.karnataka.gov.in)** Downloading Tender Documents from e-Procurement Portal of Government of Karnataka. Submission of tenders online through e-procurement portal within the prescribed date and time.

Date of issueing of blank tender forms	**Date. 24-03-2026 to Date. 08-04-2026 Time 17-00 Hours**
Last date for submission of filled tender forms	**Date. 08-04-2026 Time 17-00 Hours**
Time and date of technical bid opening	**Date. 10-04-2026 After 11-00 Am.**
Date of opening of financial bids	**After technical bid approval**

For further details technical branch can be contacted during office hours.

Sd/- Commissioner,
Urban Development Authority, Tumakuru.
DIPR/TUM/RO-310/25-26/Oysters

34001/266/2526

OFFICE OF THE ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF (CIVIL), ODISHA
NIRMAN SOUDHA, KESHARI NAGAR, UNIT-V, BHUBANESWAR - 751 001
2nd corrigendum to Bid Identification No. CE-BRIDGES - 17/2025-26

Following changes are made to the Invitation for the work "Improvement such as widening and strengthening of Turubudi PWD Road to Kuanpada via Limigam-Jhagadapalli - Kendigumma, Banibasa (ODR) from 0/000 km to 17/437 km in the District of Ganjam for the year 2025-26" vide **Bid Identification No. CE - BRIDGES - 17/2025-26.**

- The Last date of submission of tender is extended upto **5.00 PM of dt.30.03.2026.**
- Bids received on line shall be opened at **11.30 AM on dt.31.03.2026.**

All other terms and conditions remain unchanged

Sd/-
Chief Engineer, Bridges Odisha, Bhubaneswar
OIPR-34001/34174/1/25-26/0035

25001/347/2526

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, KENDRAPARA-JAJPUR
AT- CHANDIKHOL, PO-SUNGUDA, JAJPUR-754296, E-mail - serw_kpd@yahoo.com

No. Tender Online RCK-05/26 Letter No. 1770 Date: 17.03.2026

e-Procurement NOTICE

1. Name of the Work : Tender for the Road works under (MMSY-TRIP) in the Dist. of Kendrapara & Jajpur.
2. Class of Contractor : As specified in the column-6 of the Annexure
3. Time of Completion : As specified in the column-7 of the Annexure
4. Detail Projects : As per Annexure attached
5. Other details :

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender On-line for bidding From	Availability of tender On-line for bidding To	Last Date & Time of seeking Tender Clarification	Date & Time of Opening of Tender Technical Bid	Date & Time of Opening of Tender Financial Bid
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Kendrapara-Jajpur	Tender Online RCK-05/26	02.04.2026 at 11:00 AM	22.04.2026 to 5:00 PM	22.04.2026 up to 02:00 PM	23.04.2026 at 11:00 AM	To be intimated later

Further details can be seen from the website **www.tendersodisha.gov.in**.

Sd/-
OIPR-25001/25129/1/25-26/0027 **Chief Construction Engineer Rural Works Circle, Kendrapara-Jajpur**

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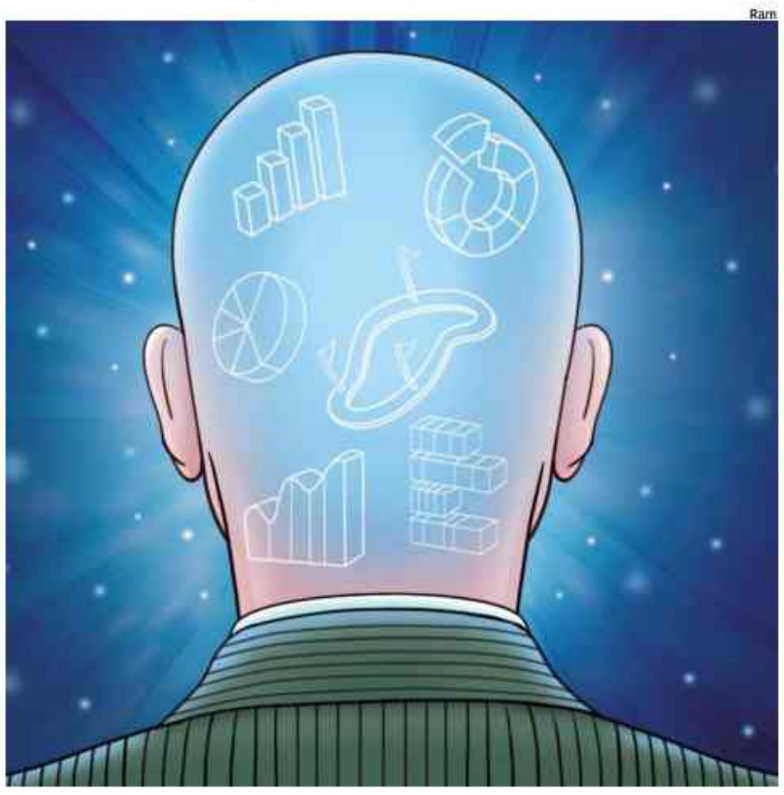
The Strategic Power Of Visualisation For Foresight

Leaders Who Visualise Well Can Map Future Organisational Journeys, Anticipate Obstacles & Align Decisions Accordingly For Sustainable Long-Term Strategic Competitive Advantage

By Prabir Jha


Ram

Across management teams, there is a persistent bias towards solving near-term problems. Many do this efficiently. Yet the capacity to anticipate, to sketch plausible futures and pre-empt responses, remains underdeveloped. Whether shaped by an education system that prizes answers over inquiry, incentives that reward short-term delivery, or a lack of role models, the deficit is clear.

Visualising is not idle speculation. It is the disciplined cultivation of individual capability and collective competence to detect emergent patterns and future possibilities—risks as well as opportunities—early.

As a leadership trait, visualisation is the deliberate ability to picture future outcomes, strategies or solutions in concrete detail before they take shape. It is less about imagination and more about foresight.

1. Move from data to patterns: In an age where one can drown in swamps of data, stepping back to ask, "So what is the story?" is a simple but powerful way to begin visualising. Engagement has to be deliberate, not driven by autopilot.

2. Create future snapshots: Forecasts have their place but are often too linear, with obvious limitations in a BANI (brittle, anxious, non-linear and incomprehensible) world. Future snapshots could include small but telling exercises—a meeting agenda imagined three years ahead, or a future customer archetype. Forcing people to step away from today's spreadsheets towards strategic foresight can be a significant breakthrough.

3. Leaders must think slower: Counter-intuitive as it may sound, the habit and expectation of thinking fast erodes the ability to reimagine. Leaders are choked with back-to-back meetings and even take pride in being unavailable. That is the problem. Learning to block time to do nothing requires conscious effort. Unstructured time allows the mind to move beyond execution into reflection, pattern recognition and synthesis. Without it, thinking stays reactive, tethered to inboxes and meetings. With it, connections form, assumptions are questioned, and longer-term ideas surface.

4. Images to communicate strategy: Many leaders operate with a strong left-brain bias. The relentless pursuit of accuracy often paralyses the ability to visualise possibilities. Even in communication, heavy management jargon makes it harder for the wider organisation to visualise strategy. Leaders need coaching to adopt more effective ways of scenario thinking and communication.

5. Leadership composition: Shifting from a complex, data-biased decision-making culture to a visualisation-anchored strategic approach is far from easy. Organisations need diversity of thinking among leaders—more people who can visualise beyond the immediate. Culture must encourage contrarian visualisation rather than dismiss it as dissidence. This is a strategic choice, particularly for organisations that want to be future-ready beyond quarterly reportage.

A stark yet under-explored dimension of strategic leadership, visualisation holds immense promise for individuals and institutions alike. It is key to planning for the future, not just managing the present. Its appeal may seem disruptive, but the future of business and the world is unlikely to remain incremental. Building visualisation as a core leadership competence must therefore begin today.

(The author is the Founder & CEO, Prabir Jha People Advisory)

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4.	Deputy Director (Academics)		01			
5.	Deputy Director (Liaisoning)		01			
6.	Deputy Director (Student Services)		01			
7.	Deputy Director (Legal)		01			
8.	Assistant Director (Studies)	(New Delhi/ Noida)	02	Level 10 (56100–177500)	14.02	40 years
9.	Assistant Director (Academics)		01			
10.	Assistant Engineer (Infrastructure & Building Maintenance)	(New Delhi/ Kolkata/ Mumbai / Chennai)	04	Level 8 (47600–151100)	11.42	35 years
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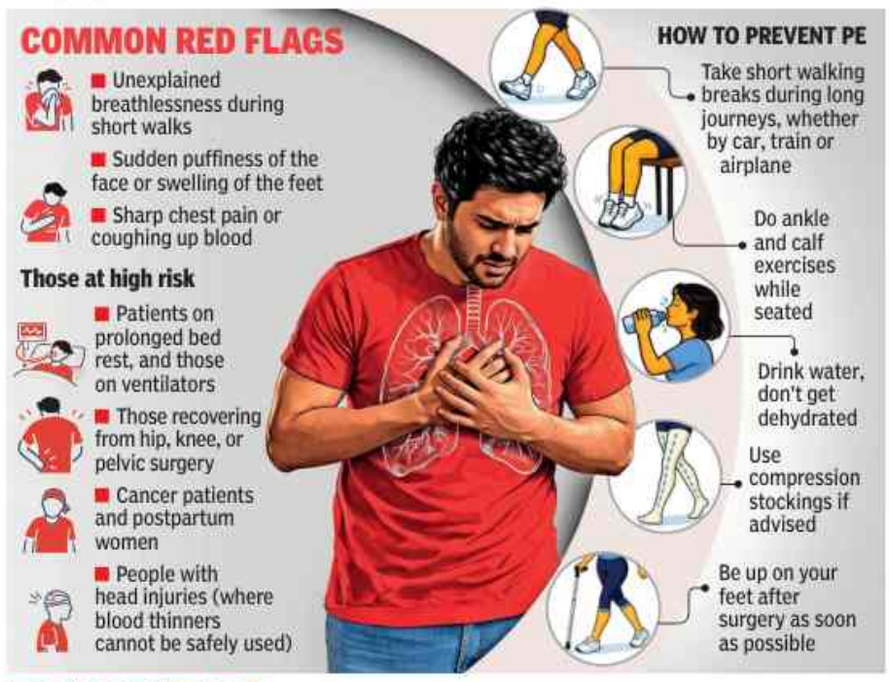
How a blood clot in one's leg can show up as sudden chest pain

It can travel silently to the lungs and turn life-threatening — doctors say it's often missed till it's too late

Shimona.Kanwar@timesofindia.com

A blood clot is a boon when you nick yourself while shaving or get a cut from the kitchen knife. Clotting stops you from bleeding out. But when a clot blocks arteries in major organs like the heart or lungs, it can quickly become life threatening. In Jan, actor Catherine O'Hara — famous for the 'Beetlejuice' and 'Home Alone' movies — was taken to a Los Angeles hospital with breathing difficulties and died of pulmonary embolism (PE), a blood clot that travelled up her legs and clogged an artery in her lungs.

"PE is grossly underdiagnosed," explains pulmonary medicine expert Dr Randeep Guleria from Medanta Hospitals, Gurgaon. "For many, the only symptom might be sudden breathlessness or chest pain," he says, highlighting the need for a high "index of suspicion".


COMMON RED FLAGS
■ Unexplained breathlessness during short walks
■ Sudden puffiness of the face or swelling of the feet
■ Sharp chest pain or coughing up blood
Those at high risk
■ Patients on prolonged bed rest, and those on ventilators
■ Those recovering from hip, knee, or pelvic surgery
■ Cancer patients and postpartum women
■ People with head injuries (where blood thinners cannot be safely used)
HOW TO PREVENT PE
Take short walking breaks during long journeys, whether by car, train or airplane
Do ankle and calf exercises while seated
Drink water, don't get dehydrated
Use compression stockings if advised
Be up on your feet after surgery as soon as possible

REMAINS UNDETECTED

March is global 'Blood Clot Awareness Month', and experts from India are calling for more awareness about PE. Often dismissed as a secondary complication, PE is now identified as a leading cause of preventable hospital mortality worldwide — a 'silent killer' that frequently remains undetected until it is too late. A 2024 study published in the journal, Cureus, says PE is the third most common cause of cardiovascular disease mortality globally after stroke and coronary artery disease, with around one lakh fatalities annually.

According to Dr Ajay Savlania, a vascular surgeon at PGIMER Chandigarh, the condition is a fast-moving spectrum that broadly falls under the Venous Thromboembolism (VTE) umbrella (blood clots are also called thrombi). A clot typically begins in the deep veins of the legs as Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT). The moment the clot dislodges, it travels through the venous system into the right side of the heart, and finally chokes circulation in the pulmonary artery. This is what manifests late as PE and turns fatal for a patient, doctors say.

WHO IS SUSCEPTIBLE?

Those at higher risk of PE are immobilised patients such as those on ventilators, head injury victims, or women in the postpartum period. Prolonged bed rest for 10 to 12 days creates the perfect environment for what is known as Virchow's Triad: blood stasis (pooling), vessel wall damage, and hypercoagulability (sticky blood), which can together lead to PE. "Any prolonged sitting or standing beyond four to six hours can lead to blood stasis in susceptible individuals," says Dr Savlania. The condition begins with DVT, most often in the legs, due to slower blood flow and gravity-related pooling of blood.

Surgery also raises PE risks. "After a major surgery, the body naturally increases clotting ability to prevent bleeding. However, this protective mechanism can sometimes overshoot, leading to clot formation elsewhere, especially in the legs," adds Dr Savlania.

O'Hara had rectal cancer. For cancer patients, PE is the second-leading cause of death after cancer itself. Smokers, those with a family history of blood clots, diabetes and varicose veins are also at risk.

FROM LEGS TO LUNGS

The leg veins are vulnerable because they act like reservoirs where blood tends to pool. Clots in the pelvis or upper thigh veins also carry a higher risk of breaking off and causing a PE. While not every DVT leads to pulmonary embolism, the risk of recurrence remains higher compared to the general population. Studies suggest a recurrence risk of approximately 5-7% in certain groups.

According to a 2024 NAMS (National Academy of Medical Sciences) task force report, the annual incidence of PE in India ranges from 39 to 115 per one lakh population (53 to 162 for DVT). The report also mentions that more than 50% of surgical patients in India are at risk of developing these clots. Dr Guleria attributes the earlier onset of PE in India to regional factors like dehydration due to extreme heat and lower fluid intake as compared to people in the West. Interestingly, clinicians are also seeing a rise in what they call "e-thrombosis" among office workers and gamers who regularly remain sedentary for over four hours.

> **After a major surgery, the body naturally increases clotting ability to prevent bleeding. But this protective mechanism can overshoot, leading to clots forming elsewhere, especially in the legs**
>
> **Dr Ajay Savlania,** VASCULAR SURGEON AT PGIMER, CHANDIGARH

Diagnosis remains a complex challenge. While the D-dimer blood test is a vital screening tool due to its high negative predictive value, the gold standard remains a clinical assessment followed by a venous doppler scan. If results are inconclusive, doctors utilise CT Pulmonary Angiogram, the standard imaging for detection.

Dr Guleria recalls the case of a 16-year-old boy who was mismanaged with antibiotics for months for a pneumonia and fluid retention until a history of leg swelling revealed PE. Similarly, a young student in Shimla developed a clot while climbing stairs, proving that even those without traditional risk factors can be vulnerable to PE.

SOUND TREATMENT

For acute cases, surgeons use ultrasonic sound waves delivered via catheter to 'pulverise' clots into microscopic particles. Others utilise temporary Inferior Vena Cava (IVC) filters — tiny metal umbrellas — to catch travelling clots before they reach the heart. Even after successful treatment, the shadow of the disease lingers in the form of post-thrombotic syndrome, a chronic condition of leg pain and swelling.

However, when a clot persists for more than three months, it turns into a tough, fibrous mass that medication cannot dissolve. For these cases, specialists at Narayana Health have introduced Balloon Pulmonary Angioplasty. "While surgery handles the larger vessels, we use BPA to open the smaller, deeper branches," says Dr Bagirath Raghuraman, director, heart transplant programme at Narayana Institute of Cardiac Sciences, Bengaluru. This is crucial because chronic clots often lead to right-sided heart failure, which means the heart is forced to work at triple efficiency, causing liver congestion, abdominal distension and puffiness of the face.

The medical consensus remains that early detection is most effective. A 2025 UK study published in Clinical Medicine says targeted post-PE programmes with supervised exercise and physiotherapy can improve long-term function among patients and help break the cycle of inactivity and fear of exertion. But for many survivors, treatment is a lifelong commitment. "We can remove the clot formed today, but the primary source remains," Dr Raghuraman says.

TIPS, TRENDS & TECH

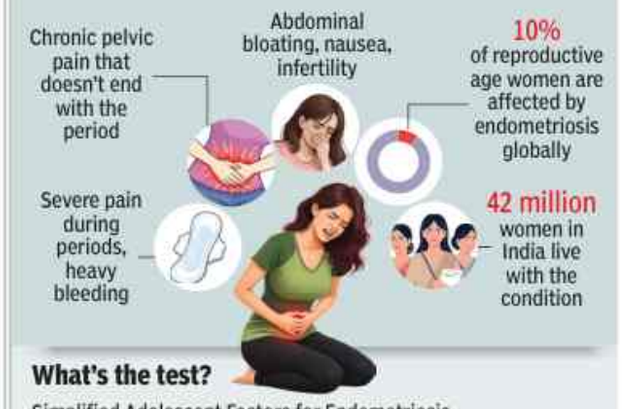
KNOW YOUR VITAL STATS

Is that period pain endometriosis? This test is a SAFE bet

A common cause of period pain is endometriosis, which is often diagnosed years later. University of Queensland (Australia) scientists have now come up with SAFE, a screening tool, to identify risk in the adolescent years itself

What is endometriosis?

It's a condition where tissue commonly growing in the innermost uterus lining is found to grow outside the uterine cavity, forming scar tissue and causing inflammation. It can manifest at any time between menarche and menopause, and can have one or many of these symptoms:


Chronic pelvic pain that doesn't end with the period
Abdominal bloating, nausea, infertility
10% of reproductive age women are affected by endometriosis globally
Severe pain during periods, heavy bleeding
42 million women in India live with the condition

What's the test?

Simplified Adolescent Factors for Endometriosis (SAFE) score is based on six questions:

1. Do you have painful periods?
2. Do you have heavy bleeding?
3. Do you experience pelvic pain often?
4. Have you sought treatment for it?
5. Have you taken painkillers for it?
6. Does anyone in your family have endometriosis?

Answers can be used to calculate a point-based score based on yes and no (yes answers are a point and a score from 2-6 means higher likelihood). It was designed using data from 9,000 women from Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health

> **This simple tool can be used in women of any age, but we have chosen age-appropriate questions to target adolescents. By detecting endometriosis earlier, ideally as soon as they begin their periods, we hope the tool will reduce the average 6-8 year diagnostic delay and start treatment as early as possible**
>
> **Gita Mishra,** FOUNDING DIRECTOR, AUSTRALIAN WOMEN AND GIRLS' HEALTH RESEARCH CENTRE, UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

How early diagnosis helps

There's no cure for endometriosis, but spotting it earlier can stop normalising period pain and help patients get relief through medication. This will improve quality of life and could potentially change treatment for fertility issues later

Sources: Sources: The Daily Mail, WHO, news.uq.edu.au

FICTION VS FACT

Spraying perfume on neck affects thyroid gland

✗ Neck skin is thinner and has more blood vessels, which allows absorption of chemicals from perfume

✓ Thyroid gland sits beneath layers of muscle and tissue, not directly under skin surface. So, perfume chemicals aren't selectively absorbed into it

> There's no direct evidence to support that spraying perfume on neck has immediate effect on thyroid function. Phthalates, parabens, synthetic masks, and other agents in perfume are known as endocrine disruptors. But neck's surface area is too small for them to be readily absorbed into blood. But for lack of studies on long-term effects of perfume on endocrine health, it's always safer to spray perfume onto one's clothes
>
> **Dr Anusha Handral,** ENDOCRINOLOGIST, MANIPAL HOSPITAL WHITEFIELD, BENGALURU

As told to Jahnavi TR

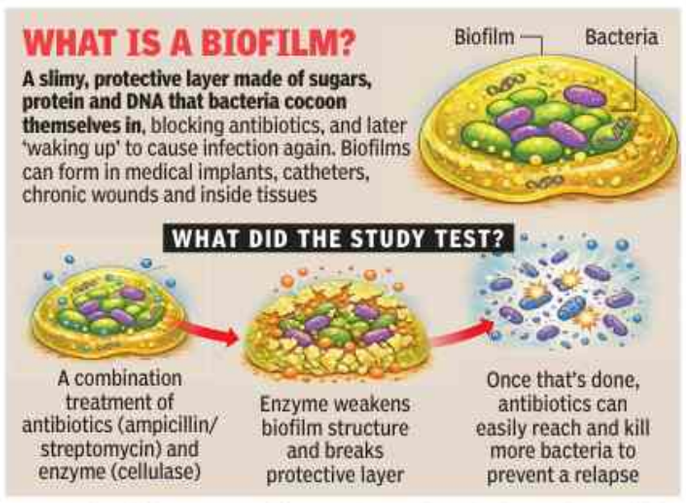
Antibiotic-enzyme combo may hold key to stopping an infection relapse

BITS Hyderabad researchers target obstinate bacterial refuge in body called 'biofilm'

Amisha.Rajani@timesofindia.com

Infections that return even after a full course of antibiotics remain one of health care's toughest challenges. A new laboratory study from BITS Pilani's Hyderabad campus explores a strategy that may help existing antibiotics work better against bacteria hidden inside protective biofilms. Findings of the study, titled 'Breaching the biofilm fortress', were published in the Chemical Engineering Journal in March.

Biofilms are structured communities of bacteria encased in a self-produced protective layer made of sugars, proteins and DNA. This slimy matrix attaches to surfaces such as catheters, implants and chronic wounds, acting like a shield that blocks antibiotic entry. And even when antibiotics kill most bacteria, some cells survive in a dormant state and later 'wake up', causing infections to return. While many studies focus on reducing biofilm mass, this research shifts attention to preventing that post-treatment comeback.


WHAT IS A BIOFILM?
A slimy, protective layer made of sugars, protein and DNA that bacteria cocoon themselves in, blocking antibiotics, and later 'waking up' to cause infection again. Biofilms can form in medical implants, catheters, chronic wounds and inside tissues
Biofilm
Bacteria
WHAT DID THE STUDY TEST?
A combination treatment of antibiotics (ampicillin/ streptomycin) and enzyme (cellulase)
Enzyme weakens biofilm structure and breaks protective layer
Once that's done, antibiotics can easily reach and kill more bacteria to prevent a relapse

"By targeting the structure of the biofilm, the approach aims to limit the survival of dormant cells that can cause relapse," says study author Ramakrishnan Ganesan from the chemistry department of BITS Pilani's Hyderabad campus, adding that the findings underline the importance of attacking the protective matrix itself.

To test the approach, the team isolated a naturally occurring, biofilm-forming E coli strain from near Patancheru Lake on the outskirts of Hyderabad, an area exposed to diverse industrial and pharmaceutical effluents. The strain was found to be closely related to sequence type 10 (ST10), a lineage known for both harmless and disease-causing variants. By using an environmentally derived strain rather than a stable lab strain, the researchers aimed to better reflect real-world bacterial behaviour.

TECHNOLOGY FOR HEALTH

The study evaluated two widely used antibiotics — ampicillin and streptomycin — both alone and in combination with cellulase, an enzyme that breaks down polysaccharides in a biofilm matrix. The idea was simple: weaken the barrier first, then allow antibiotics to penetrate more effectively. Across repeated treatment cycles, the combination therapy performed significantly better than antibiotics alone. Among the treatments tested, the streptomycin-cellulase pairing delivered the strongest results, achieving near-complete removal of viable biofilm cells under laboratory conditions.

Imaging techniques confirmed extensive breakdown of the protective matrix, allowing improved drug penetration. Safety tests conducted on mammalian cell lines showed over 90% cell viability, suggesting good biocompatibility at the experimental stage. "Suppressing biofilm resuscitation — rather than reducing biomass alone — is key to overcoming antibiotic treatment failure," says the study.

Jayati Ray Dutta, a professor at the biological sciences department and another researcher in the study, points out, "The study suggests that breaking down the biofilm barrier, rather than relying only on higher antibiotic doses, could provide an additional strategy to manage persistent infections in healthcare settings."

Further studies are needed before the approach can move towards clinical application.

LATEST IN HEALTH RESEARCH

'Forever chemicals' can hit bone density of teens

US scientists have found that exposure to PFAS, or forever chemicals that are manmade, can reduce bone density in children during their formative years, reports CNN. The study, published in Journal of the Endocrine Society, tracked more than 200 kids from birth till they turned 12, checking PFAS concentration in their blood every few years and measuring their bone density when they became teens. Those with more PFAS in blood had lower bone density. PFAS are found in clothes, food packets, paint, cleaning products and non-stick cookware.

Why you need to pick the right olive oil

Olive oil is known to support brain health. Now, Spanish researchers say the type of olive oil also matters, with extra virgin faring better for cognition than refined olive oil. According to Medical News Today, the study looked at around 700 people aged 55-75 to find that extra virgin olive oil improved cognitive function and showed greater gut microbiome diversity, crucial for a healthy gut-brain axis. "Virgin olive oil contains more bioactive compounds such as polyphenols, which may support a healthier gut microbiota and potentially contribute to better cognitive trajectories," said study author Jiaqi Ni.

✉ Email your feedback to **toihealth.plus@timesofindia.com** with Health Plus in the subject line. Please mention your name and city

GLP-1 drugs aid heart health but can't replace cholesterol & BP meds

ASK THE DOCTOR After glucose control and weight loss, GLP-1 drugs are now emerging as potential heart medicines with recent global trials showing they can lower chances of heart attacks and strokes in high-risk patients. In India, where diabetes, obesity, and premature heart disease frequently overlap, cardiologists are increasingly discussing these drugs with patients. **Dr Aftab Khan**, consultant cardiologist at Apollo Multispeciality Hospitals, Kolkata, tells **Umesh Isalkar** which patients should consider these drugs first, and why they can complement but not replace proven therapies and lifestyle changes.

■ Why are cardiologists now calling GLP-1 receptor agonists like semaglutide and tirzepatide heart medicines? What changed?
Earlier, they were used mainly to control blood sugar and help with weight loss. But over the last few years, large international trials have shown GLP-1 drugs reduce major cardiovascular events such as heart attacks, strokes and heart failure deaths in high-risk patients. For cardiologists, that changes everything. A drug that lowers weight, improves diabetes control, reduces inflammation and lowers cardiovascular risk is no longer just a metabolic drug. It becomes heart risk reduction therapy.

■ The SOUL trial is being described as a landmark study for cardiovascular outcomes in high-risk diabetes patients. What did it prove and why is it significant for patients in India?
The SOUL (semaglutide cardiovascular outcomes) trial showed that oral semaglutides significantly reduced heart attacks, strokes and cardiovascular death in people with type 2 diabetes who were already at high cardiovascular risk. This confirms that even the tablet form, not just the injectable version, can protect the heart. For countries like India, where injections can be less acceptable or accessible, an effective oral option makes treatment easier and potentially more scalable. As cardiologists, we believe SOUL trial benefits are very likely to apply to Indian patients, especially since Indians often develop diabetes, obesity, and heart disease at younger ages and lower BMI levels.

■ Studies and the STEP-HFpEF trials suggest symptom and functional improvement with semaglutide in obesity-related heart failure. In practical terms, what changes for a patient?
For patients with HFpEF (a form of heart failure in which the left ventricle is stiff and does not fill up fully) linked to obesity, the improvements are quite practical. Patients in trials reported less breathlessness, better ability to walk or exercise, improved quality of life scores, weight loss, and better functional capacity. In simple terms, many patients feel less fatigued, can walk longer distances and perform daily activities more comfortably.

■ Chronic kidney disease is often silent in Indian diabetics and overlaps with heart disease. How strong is the evidence that GLP-1 drugs protect the kidneys along with the heart?
Studies have shown that GLP-1 drugs can slow down worsening kidney function, lower protein leakage in urine and reduce cardiovascular complications in patients with kidney disease. While another class of drugs (SGLT2 inhibitors) currently has stronger kidney-specific evidence, GLP-1 drugs appear to provide additional kidney protection, especially in patients with diabetes and obesity.

■ Which categories of Indian patients should actively discuss GLP-1 drugs with their cardiologist?
The first ones should be people with type 2 diabetes who already have established cardiovascular disease — either a prior heart attack, a stent procedure, or a stroke because they remain at high risk of future cardiac events. Overweight or obese individuals with diabetes and high cardiovascular risk are another key group, as these drugs can improve overall metabolic health. Patients with obesity-related heart failure, particularly HFpEF, who experience symptoms like breathlessness and reduced exercise capacity, may also benefit as emerging evidence suggests these therapies can improve symptoms and quality of life.

■ Who should avoid them or exercise caution before use?
These drugs should be used cautiously or avoided in patients with a history of pancreatitis, those with certain rare thyroid cancers (such as medullary thyroid carcinoma), patients with severe gastrointestinal disorders, and pregnant or breastfeeding women. A doctor should always evaluate the patient individually before starting therapy.

■ How long should one be on therapy? Are these lifelong drugs like statins?
In most cases, these drugs are long-term therapies, similar to statins or blood-pressure medicines. If the medication is stopped, weight and metabolic risk factors often return, so the benefits may diminish. For high-risk patients, cardiologists usually consider them part of long-term risk management.

■ If a patient stops the drug after weight loss, does cardiovascular risk rebound?
Regaining weight is common after stopping the medication. When weight and metabolic risk factors return, cardiovascular risk can also rise again. This is why doctors emphasise that these drugs should be used along with lifestyle changes, not as a temporary shortcut.

■ These drugs are expensive and increasingly used off-label for cosmetic weight loss. In India, where access is unequal, who should get priority?
From a public health perspective, priority should go to patients with clear medical benefit, such as diabetics with existing cardiovascular disease, high-risk diabetics with multiple risk factors, and those with obesity-related heart failure. Using them purely for cosmetic weight loss while high-risk patients cannot access those, raises ethical and healthcare equity concerns.

■ Is there a danger that patients may stop statins, BP medicines, or lifestyle measures thinking GLP-1 is a 'magic bullet'?
Yes, that is a real concern. GLP-1 drugs are not a substitute for proven therapies. Patients still need statins for cholesterol, blood pressure control, a healthy diet, exercise, weight management and diabetes control. Think of GLP-1 therapy as an additional tool in the cardiovascular prevention toolbox, not a replacement for the basics. Medications cannot fix a bad lifestyle.

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NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT AND RESEARCH (NICMAR)

RECRUITMENT FOR THE POST OF "DIRECTOR GENERAL"

National Institute of Construction Management and Research (NICMAR) is a pioneering organisation dedicated to the promotion of education, training, research, professionalism, and skill development at all levels within the construction and allied industries. NICMAR is an independent, autonomous, non-government, not-for-profit entity incorporated in India in September 1983 as a Society and a Public Trust.

The NICMAR Board invites applications for the appointment of a Director General for a tenure of five years. The Director General serves as the **Chief Executive Officer** of **NICMAR.** This pivotal role provides strategic leadership, drives key institutional decisions, and oversees the operations of the Trust across all campuses and universities.

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- Provide visionary leadership to the Trust's autonomous institutes and universities.
- Liaise with the Board of Trustees and the Board of Governors to fulfil the Trust's mission of nation-building through the Built Environment / CRIP (Construction, Real Estate, Infrastructure, and Project) sector.

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(Advt. No. NITMZ/R-1/NT/13/2026/550 Dt. 19.03.2026)

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1. Library & Information Assistant (Pay Level 6) = 1 post (UR)
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3. Junior Assistant (Pay Level 3) = 1 post (1-UR)

Prescribed Application Form along with Essential & Desirable Qualifications, Pay Structure, General Instructions & Information etc. for the above mentioned posts can be downloaded from the NIT Mizoram website: ***www.nitmz.ac.in***

The **duly filled in Application Form in prescribed format,** along with all Supporting Documents, Annexure, **duly self-attested** must be **submitted in soft copy to the Email ID: *recruitmentnonteaching2026@nitmz.ac.in* on or before 20.04.2026 (5:00 PM).**

Sd/-**(Prof. AJMAL KOYA PULIKKAL)**
Registrar In-Charge
NIT Mizoram

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY INDORE
Khandwa Road, Simrol, Indore - 453552
Website : www.iiti.ac.in

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Indian Institute of Technology Indore invites ONLINE applications for Non-Teaching Position vide Advt. No. IITI/Rect./NT-01/03/2026 dated March 23, 2026 in the prescribed online format available on the Institute website. For details, please visit the link: **https://www.iiti.ac.in/recruitments/non-teaching-recruitment.** The last date for online submission of the application form is April 21, 2026, till 05:00 PM (IST).

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Advt. No. IITGoa/RECT/2026/02 Dated: 20.03.2026

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3.	Administrative Assistant	04	C	27	1-UR, 1-OBC-NCL, 1-PwBD (VH)	3
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Business Development	Manager- Finance	01
	Deputy Manager-Finance	01

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Detailed advertisement in this regard and link for submission of application shall be available on IGL website during the period 28.03.2026 to 17.04.2026.

Please refer to **careers** section of IGL website. **www.iglonline.net.**

INDRAPRASTHA GAS LIMITED
Regd. Office : IGL Bhawan, Plot No. 4, Community Centre, Sector-9, R. K. Puram, New Delhi-110 022
Website : www.iglonline.net, CIN : L23201DL1998PLC097614

Talcher Fertilizers — TALCHER FERTILIZERS LIMITED
(A JV OF CIL, GAIL, RCFL & FCIL)
Corporate Identification Number: U24120OR2015PLC019575

Advt. No.: TFL/RECT/EXE/02/2025

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPERIENCED PROFESSIONALS

Talcher Fertilizers Limited (TFL), a joint venture company of Coal India Limited (CIL), GAIL (India) Limited, Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilizers Limited (RCFL) and Fertilizer Corporation of India Limited (FCIL) has been formed for setting up a Coal Gasification based Fertilizer Plant at Talcher, Angul district, Odisha. The plant shall produce 12.7 Lakh MT per annum of urea through coal gasification process. The plant is currently under construction phase. TFL intends to recruit following experienced professionals for its Talcher Site, Angul district, Odisha.

Sr. No.	Designation	Grade	Scale of Pay	No. of Posts
1	Chief Manager – Contracts & Procurement	E-5	₹ 80000 – 220000/-	01
2	Chief Manager – Finance & Accounts	E-5	₹ 80000 – 220000/-	01
3	Chief Manager – Fire & Safety	E-5	₹ 80000 – 220000/-	01
4	Manager – Company Secretary	E-3	₹ 60000 – 180000/-	01
5	Manager – Mechanical	E-3	₹ 60000 – 180000/-	01
6	Manager – Chemical	E-3	₹ 60000 – 180000/-	01
7	Manager – Instrumentation	E-3	₹ 60000 – 180000/-	02
8	Manager – Finance & Accounts	E-3	₹ 60000 – 180000/-	03

How to Apply: Candidates can view the detailed advertisement under the **"Career Opportunities in TFL"** tab on the website **www.tflonline.co.in** for detailed eligibility criteria, qualifications, experience requirements, remuneration details, other terms and conditions, the full advertisement, and information on how to apply. Any further addendum/corrigendum/updates will only be published on our website.

Important Dates:		
1	Commencement of Online Application Process	1100 Hours on 07.04.2026
2	Last date for submission of Online Application	1800 Hours on 27.04.2026

Administrative Office: Talcher Fertilizers Limited (TFL), Administrative Building, Vikrampur, Talcher, Angul, Odisha, Pincode – 759106
Email : career@tflonline.co.in

SHRI VILE PARLE KELAVANI MANDAL'S SHRI BHAGUBHAI MAFATLAL POLYTECHNIC AND COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING
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Vile Parle (West), Mumbai -400 056.

(Approved by AICTE, Recognized by DTE Mumbai (Government of Maharashtra) and Affiliated to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Technological University)
Website: https://sbmp.ac.in Email id: principalsbmp@sbmp.ac.in
Contact Number: 022-42336000
(Permanently Non-Granted)

RECRUITMENTS

Applications are invited from the eligible candidates for the post of principal on permanently Non-granted basis. The application with supporting documents should reach to the undersigned, **"Hon.Secretary, Shri Vile Parle Kelavani Mandal, NMIMS new building, 10th Floor, V.L Mehta Road, Vile Parle (W), Mumbai-400056"** within 21 (twenty-one) days from the date of publication of this advertisement. Applications with incomplete information or documents, or received after the due date will not be considered.

The detailed about the vacant positions, reservations, Education Qualifications, Experience and other requirements, pay Scale, terms and conditions and the procedure for application is available on the college website https://sbmp.ac.in and university website https://dbatu.ac.in

Place: Mumbai
Date : 23-03-2026

-sd-
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Details of vacancy may be seen at the official website: **www.nhsrcl.in**

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Advt. No. NITMZ/R-1/F/15/2026/548 Date: 19.03.2026

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Hacked To Danger

Iran war again shows smart devices are grave security risk. US is acting on this. India must vet imports

What 10 years of fighting and killing couldn't do in Troy, a wooden gift horse did overnight. And now, almost 2,800 years after that story was first told, "Trojans" are hiding in plain sight everywhere. If you aren't reading this in print, you probably have one in your hand this moment. Your Wi-Fi router is another. Step outside, and security cameras in corridors, elevators, shops, offices and streets are all Trojans too. Iran learnt this the hard way on Feb 28, when a US-Israeli strike took out supreme leader Khamenei. Reports say Israel knew his whereabouts because it had hacked Iran's surveillance camera grid. It watched every face, every vehicle, round the clock, and used AI to zero in on persons of interest.

Think about it: what nailed Khamenei wasn't an expensive US satellite. It was hardware that Iranian citizens and state had installed themselves. Israel merely penetrated it through a back door. Just as Hamas penetrated Israel's CCTV infra before the Oct 2023 attack that – via many twists and turns – has led to this war. Russia does it in Ukraine daily, and Ukraine likewise in Russia. Every Iranian missile that finds its mark in Israel, or Gulf states, has CCTV assistance too. It's bad enough to be watched all day, but not knowing who's watching you – your supervisor, China, or a perv neighbour – makes it worse. In Jan, one security expert found 3mn unsecured CCTV cameras worldwide, with just one scan.

How did we – pretty much everyone – get here? By buying cheap cameras from China, disregarding security standards. That's true of other hardware like modems and routers also. Which explains the sudden US announcement about banning imported routers. The anxiety isn't new, though. Chinese-origin 'Volt Typhoon' hacking campaign in 2023 had exposed vulnerabilities of American infra, including telecom, power, water – anything running Chinese hardware.

More than 80% of India's electronics imports originate in China. Post-Galwan, this had raised fears of China crippling critical infra, such as our power grid. Six years on, nothing has changed fundamentally, so we should be on our guard. CCTV use has grown, and now other connected devices, like smart electricity meters, are spreading. Without careful hardware vetting, that opens too many back doors for foreign powers, and bad actors like terrorists. While we certainly need many more smart devices, let's ensure those aren't Trojan horses.

Decoding The Hormuz Shock

Transmission mechanism is broader, harsher. Higher freight, insurance costs, plus rerouting & precautionary buying, will keep energy prices high even when flows improve. It's worse for gas than for oil. Major countries must create crisis-resilient energy hubs

Nataliia Katser-Buchkovska

Fellow, Atlantic Council

The Iran war-linked energy crisis is different from previous shocks. Oil and gas markets are not simply rising, they are repricing violently, around disruption risk. On March 20, Brent settled at $112.19 per barrel, its highest since July 2022, after roughly 440mn barrels were removed from global supply, over 22 days. By March 24, after a sharp selloff on hopes of de-escalation, Brent had rebounded to about $101 per barrel, because markets reassessed the risk of prolonged disruption.

European gas prices have reacted even more sharply: they've doubled from the start of the war on Feb 28, to a peak around €74/MWh, on March 19. This is how an energy crisis now begins: not with an abstract geopolitical headline, but with a rapid repricing of oil, gas, freight, insurance, and strategic risk across the global economy.

An additional layer of volatility came from politics itself. On March 23, Trump postponed planned US strikes on Iran's energy infra for five days, citing what he described as "productive" contacts with Iranian officials. Markets initially treated that as a possible off-ramp. But the relief proved brief. Iran denied that any such talks were taking place. Prices rebounded. Markets are reacting not only to physical disruption, but also to rapidly shifting signals from political leaders.

This crisis is not about one dominant supplier, weaponising pipeline dependence, like Russia did with Europe, in 2022. It is a route shock, centred on the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most critical maritime chokepoints. That means, the present crisis hits oil and LNG markets globally from day one, rather than radiating outward from one place.

So, the transmission mechanism is harsher, and broader. In 2022, Europe was the main victim, while Asia felt the shock mostly through LNG competition and higher import prices. Today, Europe and Asia are exposed simultaneously.

India, in particular, is vulnerable. Reports say that Qatar supplied 41% of India's LNG imports in 2024/25. West Asia accounted for 59% of India's crude imports in Feb 2026, the highest share since Aug 2022. India depends on imports for more than 90% of its oil, and about half of its gas needs. That means the Iran crisis is not just an energy issue for India; it is a macroeconomic one, affecting inflation, freight, fertiliser, industrial costs, and trade balances.

The market backdrop makes this even more dangerous. The global gas market was already tight before the conflict escalated, and the present shock is proving harsher for gas, than for oil. LNG is far less flexible to reroute, harder to store, and more dependent on fixed infrastructure. Oil cargoes can often be redirected; gas cannot. That means a route disruption in the Gulf, transmits more quickly, and more stubbornly, into gas markets, especially in Europe and Asia.

Image: AI

Europe is less vulnerable than it was in 2022, but not safe. It has reduced dependence on Russian gas dramatically, yet its new vulnerability is greater exposure to global LNG competition, and maritime disruption. In other words, Europe is no longer overdependent on one pipeline supplier; it is more exposed to a global shipping-cum-LNG price shock. This is a strategic improvement, but not immunity.

But there is a deeper shift underway. Russia demonstrated that energy dependence can be exploited for geopolitical coercion. The Iran shock shows that routes, chokepoints, and maritime energy flows can also be weaponised.

Remember, even armies depend on energy, just as societies do. Military readiness relies on secure access to fuel, electricity, logistics corridors, ports, rail, and resilient supply chains. Tanks, aircraft, naval fleets, air defence systems, communications infra, and military-industrial production all depend on uninterrupted energy supply.

A country or an alliance with weak energy resilience, is strategically vulnerable not only in its economy, but in its defence posture. Energy, therefore, is not only the object of conflict; it is one of the foundations of deterrence and defence capability. The current crisis is demonstrating, in real time, that energy infra is part of the battlespace.

So, how is the situation evolving? The risk now has two layers. The first is physical: attacks on Gulf infrastructure, and disruption in Hormuz, have already constrained flows. Per reports, around 17% of Qatar's LNG export capacity is offline, potentially for years. The second risk is commercial: even where physical flows are not fully interrupted, higher freight rates, insurance costs, rerouting, and precautionary buying keep prices elevated.

That is why the market is reacting not only to barrels of oil and cargoes of gas already lost, but to the fear that the disruption will stretch into the next refill and procurement cycle.

The strategic answer is not just "find another supplier". Countries have to think bigger – create energy hubs. The future of energy security lies not in isolated assets, but in clustered systems. A terminal on its own improves import capacity. But a hub that combines LNG, storage, interconnectors, power generation, batteries, industrial demand, and logistics, creates something much more valuable: optionality.

Gas can be imported, stored, redirected, converted into power or industrial output, and moved onward through pipelines, grids and ports. That is the difference between infrastructure that functions in normal times, and infrastructure that survives crises.

The larger conclusion is clear. The 2022 Ukraine shock taught the world to diversify suppliers. The 2026 Iran shock is teaching it to diversify routes, reinforce infrastructure, and build resilient energy hubs.

Energy security is no longer only about molecules. It is about systems that can move, store, convert, and protect them under stress. Energy now underpins not just economies, but defence readiness itself. So, resilience in energy infra is proof of your strategic power.

Quota & Data

Higher political representation for women should not be based on outdated population stats

GOI's twin objectives this Parliament session, 1) advance the delimitation exercise, which decides the number of representatives in Lok Sabha, and 2) change laws in order to roll out women's 33% quota by 2029 LS polls, need parsing. For both of these to happen, constitutional laws need to be tweaked. Delimitation must be delinked from the current Census. Women's quota has to be delinked from delimitation, and, perhaps, even be relinked to delimitation, basis Census 2011.

First, the women's quota. When the law was passed, its implementation was tied to post-Census 2021/now 2027, delimitation. Even at the time, it wasn't clear why women's quota was linked to delimitation. The spirit of the women's quota, is, for male MPs to not feel miffed that they'll "lose out" to women. Empowerment is about sharing of resources, equitably. If GOI is keen to embellish its record of empowering women, the straightforward way would be to enforce the quota within the 543-seat Lok Sabha, and in state legislatures, right away. Rotating seats for reservation – every third constituency – is the most discussed design.

Delimitation, after Census 2027, is a fraught exercise. For states that had stabilised population, it meant losing LS seats. Delimitation + women's quota presented itself as a double whammy for such states. So, for some, delimitation, basis Census 2011, may appear to make sense, going by political tea leaves. If divvied on outdated data of Census 2011, Parliament seats are set to go up to 816. This will increase, say, Kerala's LS seats, from 20 to 30; ten reserved for women. It is all very well in the realm of theory, and speculation. Reality is, pushing constitutional amendments for political ends, may end up misrepresenting ground reality. Basing delimitation on Census 2011, disregards India's massive urban expansion and internal migration the last 15 years. Delinking delimitation from Census also inserts, for the foreseeable future, a lag between population growth & distribution, and political representation. And, worryingly, these twin moves signal GOI's uncertainty about Census 2027's implementation, with all its new experiments – self-enumeration and caste census are just two of the most consequential ones.

Shape-Shifting Politics & Seats Of Assam

Redrawn constituencies, targeted evictions, post-CAA politics, and a possible women's voting bloc, make the state more interesting. And it's not just BJP vs Congress. Regional parties are biding their time

Dhriti Sonowal

Assam's upcoming assembly election will be the first in recent memory to be held in a single phase, for an electorate of 2.5cr people. While delimitation, carried out in 2022-2023, by ECI, retained legislature size at 126 seats, the constituency boundaries were redrawn, and so, it is a newish electoral landscape. The exercise was also criticised by some, for using the 2001 Census as basis for population, instead of 2011 Census.

So, it is delimitation that will shape contests and outcomes. Add to that the special revision, even if not a full-fledged SIR. The newly drawn boundaries have changed the composition of constituencies. Parties are scrambling to accommodate newly eligible candidates, who meet criteria to contest in constituencies where incumbents are no longer eligible.

In the run-up, there is much to and fro, to see who contests from which seat and their winnability in the new constituencies. Himanta govt has also gone out, loudly, to curry public support to address illegal land encroachment by massive eviction drives. This, too, may influence voter presence and voting behaviour.

But, politics of infiltration aside, the real highlight of Himanta's govt has been the scale of its direct cash transfers to women, under multiple direct benefits schemes. *Orunodoi* and *Lakhpati Baideo* are some of the largest DBT schemes in Assam's history. As in Bihar, women are likely to become a key voter base for BJP in Assam, where women have never, as such, been a standalone voter bloc.

BJP won't contest all 126 seats, eager for non-confrontational seat-sharing with partners in the NDA alliance, AGP and BPF. Sustaining alliances hasn't been BJP's strongest suit, especially in the politically significant Bodoland Territorial Region. BJP has had to keep switching between the two regional tribal parties, UPPL and BPF, building pragmatic alliances with these ethnic parties, to fulfil short-term goals.

POLLS 2026
Bengal, TN, Assam, Kerala

In Assam, unlike any other state in India, ethnic communities have driven major political agendas. The latest was the demand for ST status by six ethnic groups. In its bid to fulfil their demands, BJP seemingly resorted to major strategic calculations – that would fill the leadership void in upper Assam, after Sarbananda Sonowal was shifted to national-level politics.

In upper Assam, where most of the indigenous community votes are concentrated, can Congress's Gaurav Gogoi become the face attracting the anti-incumbency vote? Assam Congress is in a complex state of affairs, with internal party fissures, seeing veterans exit. This has projected an image of a state unit and central leadership that are unable to retain loyalists.

Gaurav Gogoi, who won the upper Assam seat, Jorhat, in LS 2024, filed his nomination on Wednesday – his electoral debut in state elections. What remains to be seen is whether Congress has the resources for him to replicate his LS win. Gogoi's success in Jorhat had created a glimmer of hope for Congress, as it meant setting the stage for installing a strong leader in upper Assam.

However, support for Gaurav Gogoi, in upper Assam's assembly seats (Jorhat LS seat has 10 assembly segments), is not uniform. Road shows have become the mainstay of Congress's outreach, after the success of Bharat Jodo Yatra. And Gogoi has followed Rahul Gandhi's yatra-mantra with his Samay Parivartan-'Mati Bachao, Jati Bachao' yatra, to intensify grassroots-level campaigns across Assam.

Delimitation, revised electoral rolls, new post-CAA politics, a new potential women's voter bloc make this an election fought on several unknowns. It is clear, though, that straight bipartisan competition is unlikely. Regional parties are vying for essential roles in both alliances. It is, especially, a task for Congress-led six-party state opposition. Regional parties, such as Raijor Dal and Asom Jatiya Parishad, seem to have taken too long to form a unified opposition that can project itself as an alternative to BJP. Plus, NDA has all the advantages of incumbency.

Congress faces a Herculean task. Seeking new alliances seems to be its strategy in the party's final sprint to the hustings. With Hemant Soren's JMM seeking to contest in 31 constituencies in Assam, where tea-tribe and Adivasi communities are concentrated, there seems to be new hope that a post-poll alliance might buoy Congress.

Pre-poll politics have included villainising rhetoric against Gaurav Gogoi. Congress, on its part, has alleged abuse of power by CM to acquire and sell land. But the public gains nothing from any of this. Currently at a crossroads, is it more development, more targeted evictions, direct cash transfers, or transparency of govt that people of Assam will vote for? Each a politically explosive issue, these are the unknowns on which the state will vote.

The writer is Asst Professor, Dibrugarh University

Cockroach, my friend

We must rethink our fear of the six-legged being

If humans' deep dislike had the power to wipe it out, the cockroach would be doomed. But it's thriving. It's gone to space. It's even had babies in space. And given its established history of hitching rides on ships, planes, trains, one does wonder whether it did a similar jumperoo off the Russian bio-satellite mission where it had 33 babies. Could it now be populating some other part of the universe? Remember, it's been on Earth since before the dinosaurs. Its surviving *that* extinction event underlines its resilience to hostile circumstances. The idea informs *WALL•E* too, where on an Earth desolated by ecocide, the titular robot's only companion is Hal the cockroach. The two of them are cleaning the planet, all by their twosome self.

Cockroaches are, indeed, the essential decomposers of this planet. Their storied 'dirtiness' is completely at odds with this fact. Indeed, so intense, irrational, and overwhelming is many people's fear of cockroaches that it has a word of its own: Katsaridaphobia. And some of the world's worst atrocities have involved human beings conceptualising other human beings as roaches. Germany's Nazis and Rwanda's Hutus, both set the scene for mass killings, with such dehumanisation. But as David George Gordon establishes in *The Compleat Cockroach*, an exhaustive study of the creature, the extreme disgust response to cockroaches is 100% disproportionate to any actual threat they pose. And what is the classic antidote to irrational fear and hatred? Knowledge. To know the cockroach better, is to appreciate it, if not love it.

THIRD EDIT

In India, research on cockroaches goes back two and half centuries. And it's just identified a new species near Pune. That we are just finding out about Neoloboptera peninsularis, doesn't mean it hasn't always already been here for millennia. Who are we, then, to try to wipe them out by foul means? Those sprays with which we chase them, don't just add poison to our homes, but basically cause extreme convulsions in the victim, who then flips over, and dies a needlessly painful, indeed sadistic, death. Why not choose more humane alternatives? This includes doing a more decent job of cleaning up after ourselves. Cockroaches are too ancient, and too implanted in Nature, for our negativity to crush them. It may be harming us more than them.

Calvin & Hobbes

I'M THINKING OF STARTING MY OWN TALK RADIO SHOW.
I'LL SPOUT SIMPLISTIC OPINIONS FOR HOURS ON END, RIDICULE ANYONE WHO DISAGREES WITH ME, AND GENERALLY FOSTER DIVISIVENESS, CYNICISM, AND A LOWER LEVEL OF PUBLIC DIALOG!
IT WOULD SEEM YOU WERE BORN FOR THE JOB.
IMAGINE GETTING PAID TO ACT LIKE A SIX-YEAR-OLD!

Sacred*space*

Devi does not belong to any religion. Devi is the conscious power of the Deva... The words Devi, Shakti, and ideas of different forms connected with these names are concessions given to limitations of human knowledge, human comprehension.

Swami Sivananda

Bowing To Goddess: Energy In Everything...

B Purushartha

The word 'shakti' is derived from the potential indicator root 'shak'. Therefore, 'Shakti' is the ability to do something. Outcome is inherent in the cause, in its unmanifest form, and requires Shakti to manifest itself as action. Shakti Puja is the process of awakening this inherent energy and making it useful. Without Shakti, there can be no work. Without Shakti, Shiv is incapable of performing actions and is no more than a corpse.

But this does not mean that Shiv and Shakti are two separate entities. Infinite energy lies in every substance, even in a vacuum. Similarly, even though there is a difference between Shiv and Shakti from a practical point of view, Shiv and Shakti are virtually the same. When Shiv is not united with Shakti, He is inactive, non-creative but Shiv is never powerless. In a powerless state, Shakti remains absorbed in Shiv in an unmanifest form. In such a state, Shakti is not in union with Shiv. Union with Shiv happens only when Shakti is in manifest form.

How can this dormant energy be awakened and the purpose achieved? How can one become powerful with the help of those within whom this power is awakened? This is the mystery of Shakti Puja. Shakti is worshipped to express. Without worshipping Shakti or without taking refuge in the awakened Shakti, the soul cannot experience its Shiv-ness. There is no lack of light in the world, but the person with eyes closed can't see it. To realise light, one must first open their eyes. There is no lack of knowledge in the world, but the ignorant can't achieve it. To achieve knowledge, one must awaken one's inner *Jnan-Shakti*.

THE SPEAKING TREE

In the same way, God is self-revealed or self-illuminating, but to realise God, one has to remove the veil over one's senses and awaken one's inherent power. God cannot be realised without the full manifestation of the latent power of our senses. With the awakening of this power, God is visualised in celestial form, *Vishwarup*, and then it is also realised that there is only one entity manifested in everything in the world.

But we are incapable of realising Shakti on our own, so it is natural to pray to God for enabling us to realise Her vision. When there is grace from Ma Adhyashakti, illumination happens in two ways: The mother destroys our vices in the form of Kali and then empowers us in the form of Shri. In this way, She enables us to realise God within. This is the sole purpose of Shakti Puja. It should be remembered that there is no difference between Shakti and the holder of Shakti, Shaktiman, and Shaktiman brings his beloved *jiva* closer with the help of Shakti. Ma AdhyaShakti is the primordial energy that empowers everything and performs every work in this world. Everything in the world is her expression.

Ya Devi sarvabhutesu saktirupena samsthita, namastasyai namastasyai namastasyai namo namah – I bow to the goddess who is inherent in the form of energy in everything.

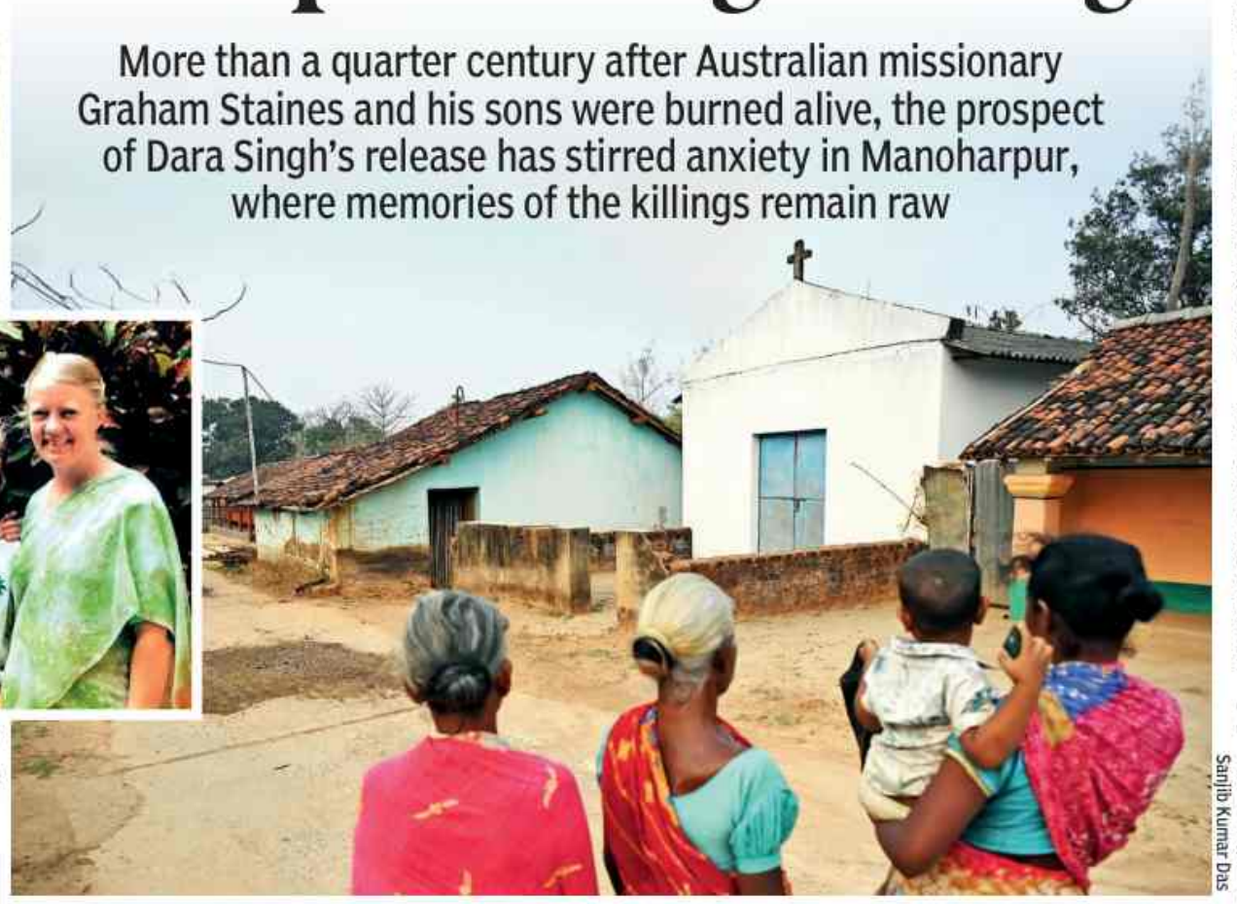
The writer is joint secretary, GOI. Views are personal

Ashok.Pradhan@timesofindia.com

27 yrs after Staines' burning, talk of killer's release puts village on edge

More than a quarter century after Australian missionary Graham Staines and his sons were burned alive, the prospect of Dara Singh's release has stirred anxiety in Manoharpur, where memories of the killings remain raw

Graham Staines with his sons, daughter and wife Gladys, who was later conferred the Padma Shri. An inquiry panel dismissed accusations of forced conversion that were said to have led to the fatal attack on the missionary and his sons



Mahendra Hembram (extreme left) and Dara Singh were the main convicts in the Staines' killings. Hembram walked out of jail last year after serving 25 years. "I was an undergraduate student in Baripada and was arrested 11 months after the incident... When the assassins of Rajiv Gandhi were released..., I felt hopeful that someday I, too, would step out," Hembram had said before his release. The Odisha govt is now considering Singh's remission plea

Sanjib Kumar Das

Tribal residents of Manoharpur gaze at the spot outside the church where the Staines were burnt alive in their car on the night of Jan 22-23, 1999

Nayam Marndi has long lost count of her own age, but the woman — now in her 70s — has not forgotten the horrific night of Jan 22-23, 1999.

Sitting on the verandah of a neighbour's house in Kacha Sahi of Manoharpur village, she points towards the spot, next to a church, where Graham Staines and his two sons, Philip (10) and Timothy (6), were burnt alive. "It happened exactly there," she says, the memory of that night tightening her wrinkled face and moistening her eyes.

Twenty-seven years after the brutal killings, the case is back in the headlines after the Odisha govt placed before the Supreme Court its 2022 remission policy, which allows remission for convicts whose death sentences have been commuted to life imprisonment after 25 years in jail. Dara Singh, convicted for the killing of Staines and his two sons, has already spent more than 26 years in prison.

Odisha advocate general Pitambar Acharya informed the apex court that the State Sentence Review Board is actively examining Singh's remission plea and has sought reports from Odisha prison authorities and the administration of Singh's native Auraiya district in UP.

A woman in her 30s in Kacha Sahi appeared uneasy at the prospect of Dara's release. "Mahendra Hembram had come here some time ago, and our people told us to be careful. We did feel intimidated. I don't know what it will mean for us if Dara Singh returns," the woman – a Christian – said, adding, "The situation, after all, has remained peaceful all these years." Hembram, another convict in the burning case, came straight back to the village after serving 25 years in prison.

"All of us — my husband Benjamin, our two sons and daughter — were locked inside as the mob grew in size," recalls Marndi. "From the room, we heard the shouting of the crowd and the cries of the helpless victims," says the woman whose house stands just one dwelling away from the church. By the time their door was unlatched the next morning, the burnt vehicle and bodies inside had turned the village into the site one of the most horrific crimes Odisha had ever witnessed.

"Life has been quiet since then. Our children have grown up. But the memory is still fresh," says Marndi, who speaks only Santali but understands Odia. "Our village had never seen a night like that before, and it has never seen anything like it since."

Night That Changed Manoharpur

Back to that winter night in Jan 1999. Staines had converted the rear of his station wagon into a makeshift bed, covering the vehicle with straw to keep out the cold. Close to midnight on Jan 22-23, a mob descended on the spot, raising loud cries as it advanced. Armed with axes and other weapons, the attackers smashed the vehicle before dousing it with petrol and setting it ablaze.

The inferno consumed the missionary and his two young sons, turning the quiet clearing into the site of a brutal act of religious hatred. Staines and his children were asleep after attending an annual "jungle camp", a social and spiritual gathering. The mob was enraged by what it believed were missionary conversions and the "ruining of tribal culture".

How The Village Remembers

For younger residents, the horror survives in stories that still surface in village conversation. "We have heard the account from our elders. People still talk about it," says Malati Marndi, who came to Manoharpur after her marriage five years ago.

Ask anyone in the village, and they pause before speaking. Nimai Murmu, a 67-year-old farmer, finally puts it this way: "There were tensions and disagreements, but no one imagined it would turn into something so horrific. We live together peacefully now, but the scar of that night will stay with us forever."

The village itself has changed visibly. A new, much larger, church now stands a stone's throw from the old one, which remains intact, but locked. The road leading in is well paved, like most in the state, and clay-tiled roofs have started to make way for concrete structures. Prosperity is visible in parts, though for many villagers, rearing goats, collecting mahua flowers, and seasonal agriculture remain the main sources of livelihood.

"I was an undergraduate student in Bhubaneswar then," recalls Bhuban Murmu, a 47-year-old grocery shop owner. "I read about the incident in a newspaper and rushed here. The village felt unfamiliar that day — it was hard to believe it was the same place where we had grown up."

The murders shocked the nation. Then PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee condemned the killings, while President K R Narayanan described the crime as "belonging to the world's inventory of black deeds" and "a monumental aberration" that had tarnished India's tradition of tolerance.

The attackers had accused Staines of carrying out forced conversions — allegations his family has consistently denied. Singh and Hembram were sentenced to life imprisonment, with the Supreme Court observing that such violence "strikes at the root of an orderly society".

Making A Home In India

The shock of that night still reverberates far beyond Manoharpur, around 70km from Keonjhar district headquarters and close to the Mayurbhanj border. It was in the isolated pockets of Mayurbhanj, where leprosy patients once lived as outcasts, that the Australian missionary devoted much of his life. Arriving in Baripada in 1965, he spent the next three decades transforming countless lives before his own was cut short.

Born in 1941 in Palmwoods, Queensland, Staines was just 24 when he first came to India. Working with the Evangelical Missionary Society of Mayurbhanj, he immersed himself in local life and eventually became fluent in both Odia and Santali. The Mayurbhanj Leprosy Home became the centre of his mission. There, Staines did not just treat patients; he taught skills and crafts, helping those ostracised by society build sustainable livelihoods. His "jungle camps" — mobile outreach programmes — became a lifeline for remote tribal hamlets.

Staines's widow Gladys (75), a nurse, remained in India for many years after the deaths of her husband and children, continuing his work. She founded the Graham Staines Memorial Hospital in Baripada in 2004 before eventually returning to Australia. She received the Padma Shri in 2005.

> **We live together peacefully now, but the scar of that night will stay with us forever**

Today, the Staines family's legacy endures. The leprosy home in Baripada continues to serve many, while the hospital founded by Gladys functions with a skeletal staff of just one doctor and a couple of nurses. "The leprosy home currently has 51 inmates," said Subhankar Ghosh, a close associate of the Staines family who remains involved in the work they began. Run on donations from good Samaritans, it is a constant struggle to keep both the home and the hospital going, Ghosh says.

Unfinished Healing

The CBI chargesheeted 18 people on June 22, 1999. Three years later, on Sept 15, 2003, a trial court convicted Dara Singh, a Bajrang Dal member, and 12 others. Singh was sentenced to death and the rest to life imprisonment. The Orissa high court, on May 19, 2005, commuted Singh's death sentence to life and upheld Hembram's life term while acquitting the rest. The Supreme Court later affirmed the life sentences of Singh and Hembram.

Hembram, now 47, walked free in April last year after Odisha remitted his life sentence. On March 18, the SC said it expected the state govt to take a decision on Singh before May 13. "The sentence review board will take an appropriate decision soon," advocate general Acharya said.

Hembram insists what happened that night in Jan 1999 was "more of an accident than intentional". "I was an undergraduate student in Baripada and was arrested 11 months after the incident... When the assassins of former PM Rajiv Gandhi were released after completing their sentences, I felt hopeful that someday I, too, would step out," he adds. Hembram is now planning to marry a college teacher and start afresh.

The Justice D P Wadhwa Commission, set up by the Centre to probe the killings, concluded that the crime was personally driven by Singh. It found no evidence linking the attack to any organisation. It found that Singh had grown into a local strongman who exploited religious sentiments to build up support. With many cases pending against him and little administrative presence, he cultivated a following by intercepting cattle being transported and redistributing them. Over time, tribal youth began to see him as a protector figure. His attention later shifted to Christian missionaries. It was in this climate, the commission said, that he mobilised supporters and led the mob attack on the Staines.

Though associated with missionary activity, the commission noted that Staines was not directly involved in conversions. But tensions between converted and non-converted tribals, combined with prolonged administrative indifference, had created a fragile social fabric. It was within this fraught landscape that one of the country's most shocking hate crimes unfolded, leaving scars the region is still grappling with nearly three decades later.

ANDHRA PRADESH MEDICAL SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
2nd Floor, Plot No.9, Survey No.49, IT Park, Mangalagiri - 522 503
email: aphmhidc@gmail.com & ed.apmsidc16@gmail.com

Tender Notice No.14/APMSIDC/2025-26 Dated: 24.03.2026

APMSIDC invites tenders through e-procurement platform **https://tender.apeprocurement.gov.in** for 1. Identification of the service provider for providing bed linen maintenance on PPP mode to DSH hospitals in AP. 2. Procurement and supply of Equipment to Food Safety laboratories in AP. 3. Identification of service Provider for providing Community-Based Eye Screening Services in A.P under PPP Mode.
For detailed notification and further details please visit the web site **https://apmsidc.ap.nic.in & www.tender.apeprocurement.gov.in.**

APMSIDC will reserve the right to cancel the tenders at any time without assigning any reasons.

DIPR No.4934PP/CL/ADVT/1/1/2021-22 Dt.24/03/2026 **Sd/- Managing Director**

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY
SPEED RUN BETWEEN ALMATTI TO WANDAL & WANDAL TO ALMATTI
The Chief Commissioner of Railway Safety, New Delhi will conduct Statutory Inspection and speed trial run between Almatti – Wandal & Wandal – Almatti stations as part of Gadag – Hotgi doubling line on 25th March - 2026. Public Should not walk through or cross the track. Opening of the New line for public carriage will be after the certification of Commissioner of Railway Safety.

PUB/1008/AAF/PRB/SWR/2025-26 **Chief Engineer-I, Construction / Hubballi**

Download the **RailOne** app. RailOne is the all-in-one railway app by Indian Railways. Passengers can book reserved tickets, unreserved tickets, platform tickets, and season passes, check PNR status, order food, and access many more services at their fingertips. Use digital payment to book unreserved tickets through **RailOne** app, and enjoy up to a **3%** discount.
South Western Railway - SWR | SWRRLY | SWRAILWAYHQ | sw_railways

U.P.ELECTRONICS CORPORATION LTD.
10 Ashok Marg, Lucknow - 226001, Phone : 0522-2286809 / 2286812 / 4130303
Email : uplclko@gmail.com Website : www.uplc.in
E-TENDER NOTICE
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL - NOTICE
Tender ID :- 2026_UPECL_1127559_1
U.P.Electronics Corporation Limited (UPLC) issue Request for Proposal (RFP) for selection of a joint Venture Partner for planning, development, operation and maintenance of Artificial Intelligence City (AI City) over - 20 acres at Vrindavan Yojana - IT City, Lucknow, on Public - Private Partnership, Joint Venture Basis (Internation Competitive Bidding). For Bid submission, please visit https://etender.up.nic.in
Pre-bid meeting : 02.04.2026, 02.00 PM at UPLC office premises. Last date for submission of bids : 17.04.2026, 05:00 PM. For queries : uplclko@gmail.com. **MANAGING DIRECTOR**

KARNATAKA ELECTRICITY REGULATORY COMMISSION
No. 16 C-1, Millers Tank Bed Area, Vasanthanagara, Bengaluru-560052. Phone: 080-22268677/78/79 Fax: 080-22268667
Email: kerc-ka@nic.in Website: https://kerc.karnataka.gov.in
No.: KERC/SC(F)/Wind Tariff/2025 Date: **24.03.2026**
NOTICE
Sub:- Discussion paper on "The Determination of Generic Ceiling Tariff for Wind Power Projects for the purpose of Bidding for the Period FY 2026-27 to FY 2028-29" - comments invited
The Commission has issued a discussion paper on "The Determination of Generic Ceiling Tariff for Wind Power Projects for the purpose of Bidding for the Period FY2026-27 to FY2028-29" which is made available on the Commission's website **https://kerc.karnataka.gov.in**
Stakeholders/interested persons may submit their written objections/comments/suggestions on the above discussion paper to the Secretary, **KERC or before 09-04-2026.**
Sd/- Secretary
DIPR/CP/YC/6423/2025-26 Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission

11001/65/2526
GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION
CORRIGENDUM
HE-MC-MISC-0037-2025/_____/Dt._____
(**For** AI-Enabled Examination Security, Surveillance and Ancillary Support Services during Conduct of Multiple Examinations)
In continuation to the Tender Call Notice No. **HE-MC-MISC-0037-2025/10100 dated 23.02.2026** regarding "**AI-enabled Exam Security Surveillance and Ancillary Support Services during conduct of multiple examinations**", it is hereby informed that due to unavoidable circumstances the tender process is **postponed until further orders**.
The revised dates for submission of bids and opening of bids will be notified in due course.
Sd/-
Director, Higher Education
Odisha, Bhubaneswar
OIPR-11001/11001/1/25-26/0022

REVENUE DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL OFFICER AND COMPETENT AUTHORITY, (IMA & OTHER KPIDFE SCAM CASES)
Podium Block,3rd Floor, V.V Tower, Bengaluru-560001
e-mail: splocaima21@gmail.com, Phone No.080-29565353
No. SPLOCA/ADM/30/2024-25 **Date: 23.03.2026**
NOTIFICATION
Resume are invited from interested agencies/interested individuals to fill up the following various posts on contract basis which have been sanctioned and not filled up to the Office of the Special Officer and the Competent Authority (IMA and Other Scam). The applications shall be submitted to the above office. **Last date of submission of Resume: 04.04.2026**
ಹುದ್ದೆಗಳ ವಿವರ:

Sl. No	Post/ Designation	Qualification		Relevant Experience		No. of Post	Contract wage per Month
		Basic	Preference	Basic	Preference		
1	IT personnel-2 Forensic Data Scientist	BE CSE/IS with certificate in Cyber Forensics and Cyber Law (CCCFL)	BE CSE/IS with PG Diploma in CCCFL	Minimum 1 Year as Data Scientist or Cyber Forensic Expert.	1 year in CA firm or forensic audit firm.	1	50,000/- Depending on qualification and experience.

Sl. No	Post/ Designation	No. of Post	Maximum Contract wage per month	Qualification
1	Shirastedar/ Deputy Tahsildar	1	Rs. 55,000/- (Actual shall depend upon qualification & Experience)	Retired from Revenue Department & not above the age of 65 years.

Sl. No	Post/Designation	Qualification	No. of Post	Contract wage per Month
		Basic		
1	Legal Typist	LLB, Registered at Bar Council of Karnataka, typing speed 40 WPM both English & Kannada. Ability to communicate in both Kannada & English	1	22,000/- to 24,000/- including OT charges and Sitting fees as per Government norms (on outsource basis)

The Position to be filled is a post created vide Government Order and is renewable year on year. It is a post on contract, renewable on satisfactory performance with periodic enhancement of salary scales, **not a permanent government service**.
Sd/-
Special Officer and Competent Authority,
IMA and Other KPIDFE Cases,
Revenue Department, Bengaluru
DIPR/CP/6418/NR/2025-26

BENGALURU SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT LIMITED
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
(An agency of Greater Bengaluru Authority for SWM)
Reg.Office:30/1, 1st and 2nd Floor, UNI Building, Thimmaiah Road, Millers Tank Bund Area, Vasanth Nagar, Bengaluru-560051.
Ref. No.: CGM(Tech)/PS/PR/115*/2025-26 Dated: 28.01.2026
:: Public Notice ::
Management of Bulk Waste through Authorized Waste Processor in Bengaluru South City Corporation jurisdiction
{M/s Sustainable Impacts Private Limited (partner company- M/s Hasiru Dala Innovations Private Limited)-AWP No.: S-298031620605056211 2}
1. Whereas, the local authorities to notify SWM Bye- Laws under rule-15(zf) and accordingly, SWM Bye-Laws notified in Gazette vide reference No.:Addl.Comm/SWM/PR/G-/9266/2019-20, dated: 20.04.2020.
2. Chapter-VII states about duties of bulk waste generators.
3. The bye-law 20(1)(a&b)) and 21(2/3/4/5) of SWM Bye-Law 2020 states about identification of bulk waste generators and availing services of Authorized Waste Processors(AWPs) for scientific management of solid waste and domestic hazardous & sanitary waste.
4. The bye-law 21(7) of SWM Bye-Law 2020 states about the intimation to be given to authority (BSWML) about availing the services of Authorized Waste Processors authorized by the concerned authority (BSWML).
5. Whereas, rule-4(3) of SWM Rules-2016 states about payment of user fees by waste generators as notified and also, rule-15(f) states about collection of user fees from waste generators.
6. Hon'ble National Green Tribunal, Principal Bench, New Delhi has also directed and stressed upon implementation of **"Polluter Pays Principle"** in its several judgment orders issued in OA No.:606/2018.
7. The Government of Karnataka notified user fee vide reference No.: UDD 500 MNY 2024(E), dated: 04.03.2025 in which maximum service charge for bulk waste management is capped at Rs.12/- per kg. Waste Generator may negotiate with AWPs for mutually agreed service charge.
8. The Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Limited being an agency of Greater Bengaluru Authority in exercise of the powers conferred under section 272(1) of GBG Act 2024, SWM Bye-Laws 2020 and SWM Rules 2016; by following due diligence and strictly adhering to the transparent procedure, has empaneled **M/s Sustainable Impacts Private Limited as Authorized Waste Processor(certificate no. S-2980316206050562112)** and mapped to the jurisdiction of and mapped to the jurisdiction of Bengaluru South City Corporation(order dated:28.01.2026) authorizing them to engage with the bulk waste generators to operate for collection, transportation, processing and disposal strictly in accordance with the SWM Rules-2016 and BBMP SWM Bye-Laws 2020. Mandated to operate the fleet digitally to facilitate waste generators for submission of digitized reports. The AWP shall deploy eco-friendly vehicles replacing old vehicles in phased manner.
9. Previous contractual engagement of bulk waste generators with this M/s Sustainable Impacts Private Limited (partner company- M/s Hasiru Dala Innovations Private Limited) in any other jurisdiction (apart from Bengaluru South City Corporation) shall by virtue of order dated: 28.01.2026, automatically transfer to the Authorized Waste processor mapped to respective jurisdiction of the corporation. Example: M/s Ecosphere Waste Solutions-a Subsidiary of M/s Mukka Proteins Limited-AWP No.: EN-298031620230056214 9 is mapped to Bengaluru North & East City Corporation; BWGs in these jurisdictions shall tie up with this AWP only and vice versa. If any pending bills of exsiting agency shall have to be cleared within 31-03-2026. Waste generators may visit **https://bswml.karnataka.gov.in** for more information.
10. M/s Sustainable Impacts Private Limited (partner company-M/s Hasiru Dala Innovations Private Limited) shall explore the possibility of aligning existing genuine operators under them as aggregators but in line with the policy laid down by BSWML. In no case offline transaction through aggregators is permitted. **In no case will any BWG have any offline transaction, and the contracting, billing and payments have to be only with M/s Sustainable Impacts Private Limited (partner company – Hasiru Dala Innovations Privat Limited).**
- It is notified for strict acknowledgment/adoption by all the bulk waste generators {as per bye law-20(1)} viz. residential/commercial/institutional/others in the jurisdiction of Bengaluru South City Corporation only to tie up with the M/s Sustainable Impacts Private Limited (partner company-Hasiru Dala Innovations Private Limited) an Authorized Waste Processor(AWP certificate no. S-2980316206050562112) with immediate effect for scientific management of bulk waste to be compliant and adhered to statutory rules/laws.
- It is notified that none other than M/s Sustainable Impacts Private Limited (partner company-Hasiru Dala Innovations Private Limited-AWP certificate no. S-2980316206050562112) is/are authorized/empanelled as Authorized Waste Processor (AWP) of Greater Bengaluru Authority in the jurisdiction of Bengaluru South City Corporation.
- It is also, notified for information/acknowledgement of all bulk waste generators in the jurisdiction of Bengaluru South City Corporation that any non-compliance will attract penalty in accordance with the SWM Bye Laws, Environmental Compensation in accordance with the CPCB Guidelines and action in accordance with the provisions of GBGA 2024.
- The Bulk Waste Generators shall submit quarterly return in the form of digitized report generated by AWPs to BSWML as required in compliance to bye-law 14(7) of SWM Bye-Law 2020.

Sd/- Chief General Manager(Tech)/CE
Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Limited

TIMES GLOBAL

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2026

COMEDIAN BILL COSBY FOUND GUILTY OF SEXUALLY ASSAULTING A RESTAURANT SERVER IN 1972, US JURY ASKS HIM TO PAY $59.2M

IF GOD WANTED US TO BEND OVER HE WOULD PUT DIAMONDS ON THE FLOOR — JOAN RIVERS

MILEY CYRUS SAYS TOO TIRED TO THINK ABOUT 'HANNAH MONTANA' REBOOT AFTER 20TH ANNIV SPECIAL: 'THIS HAS ALREADY BEEN A LOT'

China is mapping ocean floor as it prepares for sub warfare with US

Sydney: China is conducting undersea mapping and monitoring operation across the Pacific, Indian and Arctic oceans, building detailed knowledge of marine conditions that naval experts say would be crucial for waging submarine warfare against the US and its allies.

In one example, the Dong Fang Hong 3, a research vessel operated by Ocean University of China, spent 2024 and 2025 sailing back and forth in the seas near Taiwan and the US stronghold of Guam, and around strategic stretches of the Indian Ocean, ship-tracking data reviewed by Reuters show.

In Oct 2024, it checked on a set of powerful Chinese ocean sensors capable of identifying undersea objects near Japan, according to Ocean University, and visited the same area again last May. In March 2025, it crisscrossed the waters between Sri Lanka and Indonesia, covering approaches to the Malacca Strait, a critical chokepoint for maritime commerce.

According to the university, the ship was carrying out mud surveys and climate research. But a scientific paper co-written by Ocean University academics shows it has also conducted extensive deep-sea mapping. Naval-warfare experts and US navy officials say the type of deep-sea data being collected by the Dong Fang Hong 3 is giving China a picture of the subsea conditions it would need to deploy its submarines more effectively and hunt down those of its adversaries.

The Dong Fang Hong 3 is part of a broader ocean mapping and monitoring operation involving dozens of research vessels. To gather information about underwater terrain, research vessels map the sea floor while travelling back and forth in tight lines.

At least eight of the vessels Reuters tracked have conducted seabed mapping, while another 10 have carried equipment used for mapping, according to a review of Chinese state media articles, vessel descriptions published by Chinese universities, and press releases by govt organisations.

The ship-tracking data show that China's seabed-surveying effort is focused in part on militarily important waters around the Philippines, near Guam and Hawaii, and near US military facilities on Wake Atoll in the north Pacific.

"The scale of what they're doing is about more than just resources," said Jennifer Parker, an adjunct professor of defence and security at the University of Western Australia. "If you look at the sheer extent of it, it's very clear that they intend to have an expeditionary blue-water naval capability that also is built around submarine operations."

Reuters/File

A nuclear-powered Type 094A Jin-class ballistic missile submarine of the Chinese People's Liberation Army navy in the South China Sea

Moreover, Parker and other experts added, even where data is gathered for scientific purposes, the integration of civilian scientific research and military technology development has become a key focus of China under President Xi Jinping. Beijing refers to this approach as "civil-military fusion."

In testimony to a congressional commission this month, Rear Admiral Mike Brookes, the commander of the US Office of Naval Intelligence, said China had dramatically expanded its surveying efforts, providing data that "enables submarine navigation, concealment, and positioning of seabed sensors or weapons."

The data that Chinese research vessels are collecting about the seabed and water conditions are critical to submarine operations and anti-submarine warfare, according to naval experts. Most obviously, said defence scholar Parker, commanders need information about underwater terrain to avoid collisions and hide their vessels. But that data is also essential for detecting submarines, which operate within a few hundred metres of the surface.

Around 2014, Wu Lixin, a scientist at Ocean University, proposed an ambitious effort to create a "transparent ocean" by deploying sensors that would give China a comprehensive view of water conditions and movement through specific areas, according to a statement published by the state-affiliated Chinese Academy of Sciences. The project began in South China Sea, where Ocean University statements boast it has now built an observation system covering the deep-sea basin.

In the Pacific, records from the Chinese ministry of natural resources, Ocean University and the Shandong govt show that China has deployed hundreds of sensors, buoys and subsea arrays to detect changes in water conditions like temperature, salinity and subsea movement through the ocean east of Japan, east of the Philippines, and around Guam.

In the Indian Ocean, documents from the Chinese Academy of Sciences and ministry of natural resources describe a sensor array ringing India and Sri Lanka, including along an underwater mountain range known as Ninety East Ridge. The ridge is one of the world's longest undersea mountain ranges and sits astride the approach to the Malacca Strait, through which much of China's oil supply passes. REUTERS

Hegseth said, 'Let's do it': Trump on decision-making over Iran attack

Washington: US President Donald Trump said that secretary of war Pete Hegseth was the "first one" to suggest attacking Iran when he discussed the problem in West Asia with his close aides. Speaking in Tennessee, on Monday, Trump said he called all his aides to discuss the situation in Iran before making the decision.

"I called Pete, I called General Caine (chairman of the joint chiefs air force). I called a lot of our great people. And I said, 'Let's talk. We got a problem in the Middle East (West Asia). We have a country, known as Iran, that for 47 years has been just a purveyor of terror, and they're very close to having a nuclear weapon. We can keep going and get that 50,000 up to 55 and 60, there's no end, or we can take a stop and make a little journey into the Middle East (West Asia) and eliminate a big problem," Trump said. Trump, who is facing backlash in his country over the issue, praised Hegseth for his quick response on the issue.

"Pete, I think you were the first one to speak up and you said let's do it because you can't let them have a nuclear weapon," he said. PTI

Iran And Israel Trade Strikes Amid US Claims Of Peace Talks

Iran and Israel showed no signs of letup in the 25th day of the war, further unsettling global markets even as US President Donald Trump's administration signalled momentum toward arranging formal talks to end the conflict.

Iran turned back a container ship from the Strait of Hormuz and Israel kept up strikes on the Islamic Republic, with its defence minister Israel Katz saying the campaign would continue "at full intensity."

Brent crude traded back above $100 a barrel, after plunging by 11% on Monday, as shipping through the vital Hormuz waterway remains constrained. Saudi Arabia and the UAE may join the US-Israel campaign if Iran strikes their critical infrastructure.

Air sirens in Tel Aviv

Iranian missiles triggered air raid sirens in densely populated Tel Aviv, Israel's commercial hub, where there are also military sites. A missile carved a massive crater in the road of one neighbourhood, and the blast blew out the walls of a multi-storey apartment building, scattering debris across the street. It was the latest in a series of Iranian attacks in recent days that have penetrated Israel's sophisticated air defences. There were no reported deaths.

IRGC facilities hit in Iran

Israel's military said its fighter jets had carried out a wave of strikes in central Tehran Monday, targeting command centres including facilities associated with the IRGC's intelligence arm and the intelligence ministry. It said it had hit more than 50 other targets overnight, including ballistic missile storage and launch sites. Air defence systems were activated across Tehran as explosions were heard simultaneously in several areas of the capital, according to the Iranian news agency Nournews. At least eight people were killed and 28 injured in a strike on a residential area of Tabriz, the provincial director for crisis management told Tasnim news agency.

Iran energy infra struck: Report

Iranian media reported on Tuesday that Israeli-US strikes targeted two gas facilities and a pipeline. "The gas administration building and the gas pressure regulation station on Kaveh Street in Isfahan were targeted," said the Fars news agency. The facilities in central Iran were "partially damaged", added Fars. It said an attack also targeted the gas pipeline of the Khorramshahr power plant, in the country's southwest.

AFP

Beirut suburb of Bir al Abed was targeted in Israeli airstrike on Tuesday. Israel's defence minister Israel Katz said the country's military plans to expand the territory under its control in southern Lebanon, suggesting it was ramping up its ground offensive against the Iranian-backed militia Hezbollah

Iran toughens talking stance

Iran's negotiating posture has hardened sharply since the war began, with the Revolutionary Guards exerting growing influence over decision-making, and it will demand significant concessions from the US if mediation efforts lead to serious negotiations, three senior sources in Tehran said. Iran would not only demand an end to the war but guarantees against future military action, compensation for wartime losses and formal control of the Strait of Hormuz, the sources said. Iran would also refuse to negotiate any limitations to its ballistic missile programme, they said. AGENCIES

Pak PM offers to host peace talks between US & Iran

Pakistan's PM said on Tuesday he was willing to host talks between the US and Iran on ending the war in the Gulf. In a post on X, PM Shehbaz Sharif said Pakistan welcomed and fully supported ongoing efforts to pursue dialogue to end the war. "Subject to concurrence by the US and Iran, Pakistan stands ready and honoured to be the host to facilitate meaningful and conclusive talks for a comprehensive settlement," he said.

It's possible that Trump's special envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, and US vice president JD Vance, could travel to Islamabad if an agreement was likely to be reached, said one senior Western diplomat. The US had also considered locations such as Muscat, Doha and Cairo for peace talks, but fraying relations due to the war or mistrust from either Washington or Tehran toward those govts made those options less viable, the person added.

If talks happen, it could raise Pakistan's global prominence to heights not reached since Pakistan helped mediate the secret diplomatic opening that led to US President Richard Nixon's visit to China in 1972. It would cap over a year of relationship building with Trump that has involved astute diplomacy and crypto deals. AGENCIES

MbS said to push Trump to go on with Iran war in recent calls

Julian E Barnes, Tyler Pager & Eric Schmitt

Saudi Arabia's de facto leader, Prince Mohammed bin Salman, has been pushing President Trump to continue the war against Iran, arguing that the US-Israeli military campaign presents a "historic opportunity" to remake West Asia, according to people briefed by American officials on the conversations. In a series of conversations over the last week, Prince Mohammed has conveyed to Trump that he must press toward the destruction of Iran's hard-line govt, the people familiar with the conversations said.

Prince Mohammed, the people familiar with the discussions said, has argued that Iran poses a long-term threat to the Gulf that can only be eliminated by getting rid of govt. When asked, Karoline Leavitt, the White House press secretary, said the administration "does not comment on the president's private conversations."

The Saudi views of the war are shaped by economic factors as much as political ones. Since the war began, Iran's retaliatory attacks have largely choked off the Strait of Hormuz, hobbling the region's energy industry. While Saudi Arabia and the UAE have built pipelines to circumvent the strait, those alternative routes have come under attack too.

Analysts familiar with Saudi govt thinking say that while Prince Mohammed probably preferred to avoid a war, he is concerned that if Trump pulls back now, Saudi Arabia and the rest of West Asia will be left to confront an emboldened and furious Iran on their own.

Reuters/File photo

Prince Mohammed bin Salman sees a 'historic opportunity' to remake the region, according to people briefed by US officials on the conversations

A 2019 Iran-backed attack on Saudi oil facilities — which briefly knocked out half of the kingdom's oil production — pushed the prince to reconsider his antagonistic approach to Tehran. Saudi later pursued a diplomatic détente, re-establishing relations with Iran in 2023, in part because they realised that their country's alliance with the US offered only partial protection from Iran, Saudi officials have said.

Other countries in the region, including the UAE, also pursued warmer relations with Iran in the past few years for similar reasons. After Trump's decision to go to war, Iran responded by shooting missiles and drones at countries in the region. "What little trust there was before has been shattered," Saudi Arabia's foreign minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, said last week.

Saudi officials have long expressed concerns that a failed state in Iran poses a grave threat to them, analysts say. They fear that even if Iran's govt fell, elements of the military — or militias that could emerge in the power vacuum — would continue to attack the kingdom and are likely to focus on oil targets. Some govt intelligence analysts have told other officials that they think Prince Mohammed sees the war as an opportunity for him to increase Saudi Arabia's influence in West Asia, and that he believes Saudi Arabia can protect itself even if the war continues.

While Saudi Arabia is better positioned than the other Gulf countries to weather the closure of the strait, it could face dire ramifications if the waterway is not reopened soon. Even before the war began, Prince Mohammed was facing serious financial challenges as he approached the 2030 deadline he had set for himself to transform Saudi Arabia into a global business hub. A prolonged war with Iran would put all of that at risk.

Saudi officials rejected the idea that Prince Mohammed has pushed to prolong the war. "The kingdom of Saudi Arabia has always supported a peaceful resolution to this conflict, even before it began," Saudi govt said in a statement, noting that officials "remain in close contact with Trump administration and our commitment remains unchanged." NYT

Drones disrupt AWS region in Bahrain: Amazon

San Francisco: Amazon said on Monday its Amazon Web Services region in Bahrain has been "disrupted" amid the current conflict in West Asia, marking the second time in a month that its operations have been affected by the war. The disruption is due to drone activity in the area, an Amazon spokesperson said, following a Reuters inquiry. As of Monday night, AWS had not updated its status page to reflect the impact. Amazon did not immediately respond to a query on whether its Bahrain facility was directly hit by a drone attack or if the disruption was due to nearby strikes. The company said it is helping to migrate customers to alternate AWS regions while it recovers, though it did not provide additional details such as the extent of the damage or how long it anticipates the disruption to last. AFP

Iran parl speaker floated as possible US contact in talks

Dubai: Long before he became Iran's parliamentary speaker, **Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf** went on a charm offensive for almost two decades, portraying himself as a hard-liner the West could do business with in the Islamic Republic.

"I would like the West to change its attitude towards Iran and trust Iran, and rest assured that there's an attitude in Iran to advance issues through dialogue," he told a UK-based newspaper The Times in 2008.

The 64-year-old pilot and former Revolutionary Guard commander has denied that there have been discussions with the US amid reports that he was floated as Washington's negotiating partner in talks.

Questions also remain as to what power Qalibaf has within Iran's theocracy. Khamenei's son, Mojtaba, now Iran's new supreme leader, has backed Qalibaf through his repeated and failed presidential campaigns. Still, multiple centres of power within Iran's theocracy now likely vie for control of the Islamic Republic.

Meanwhile, Qalibaf has been tied to the crackdown against protesters calling for change within Iran's govt and has seen corruption allegations swirl around him during his time in office. Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency, believed close to the Guard, on Tuesday described reports as a "political bomb" meant to put the country's leaders in disarray.

"Qalibaf was introduced as a negotiating party to present a contradictory and non-unified image of Iran," Tasnim said. "The mention of Qalibaf's name was intended to create divisions within Iran." NYT

IRGC veteran appointed Iran's new security chief

Iran appointed a hardline veteran of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as the country's top national-security leader, replacing Ali Larijani, who was killed in an Israeli airstrike last week.

Mohammad-Bagher Zolghadr was named secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Fars news agency said Tuesday. Zolghadr is a former deputy commander of the IRGC who entered politics after he was made deputy interior minister in 2005 by former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Zolghadr is very different from Larijani, who had decades of experience as a political insider with ties to both moderate figures and conservatives. Larijani also spent years as chief negotiator in nuclear talks with the West.

Zolghadr is a military man who's held several senior ranking positions in the IRGC and has little diplomatic experience. Previous roles include chief of IRGC's joint staff and, according to Fars, commander of its Ramadan Headquarters — a unit within the elite Quds Force that used unconventional tactics to fight then Iraqi President Saddam Hussein during Iran-Iraq war.

Zolghadr is closely associated with an era that started with Ahmadinejad's presidency, which saw the IRGC's influence on govt and the economy expand considerably. In 2005, when he joined the interior ministry, he was accused by reformists of leading efforts to antagonise and marginalise their faction, according to a BBC profile of Zolghadr published that year. AP

Bahrain pushes for UN-backed action for Hormuz

Paris: UN Security Council members have begun negotiating resolutions to protect commercial shipping in and around the Strait of Hormuz, including a Bahraini draft that would authorise the use of "all necessary means" — language France has warned will be difficult to adopt. The Bahraini resolution describes Iran's actions as a threat to international peace and security.

The move underscores mounting regional concern that Iran could continue to threaten the strategic chokepoint, which carries about a fifth of global oil supplies and underpins Gulf economies. Diplomats said Bahrain's draft, backed by other Gulf states and the US, uses diplomatic language to authorise force.

France circulated a more conciliatory alternative text. France's foreign minister Jean-Noel Barrot told lawmakers that there was little certainty about Bahrain's bid to permit the use of force. REUTERS

US weighs deployment of airborne troops for Iran war

Washington: Senior military officials are weighing a possible deployment of a combat brigade from the Army's 82nd Airborne Division and some elements of the division's headquarters staff to support US military operations in Iran, defence officials said. These forces could be used to seize Kharg Island, Iran's main oil export hub.

The officials described the military's actions as prudent planning, noting that nothing was ordered by the Pentagon or US Central Command, which declined to comment.

Another possibility being considered, should President Donald Trump authorise US troops to seize the island, is an attack by about 2,500 troops from the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, which is on its way to the region. The airfield on Kharg Island was damaged by the recent US bombing raids, so former US commanders said it was more likely to first bring in Marines, whose combat engineers could quickly repair airfields and other airport infrastructure.

The 82nd Airborne Division's Immediate Response Force has been deployed on short notice several times, including to Iraq in Jan 2020 after the US embassy was attacked, to Afghanistan in Aug 2021 for evacuations, and to Europe in 2022 to support operations in Ukraine. NYT

B'desh former army general held in Dhaka

Dhaka: An influential former Bangladesh army general has been arrested in Dhaka on various serious charges, including human trafficking, reports **Ahsan Tasnim**. Lieutenant General (retd) Masud Uddin Chowdhury played a crucial role in 2007 in installing a military-backed caretaker govt that had the present PM Tarique Rahman arrested.

Chowdhury, also a former Feni-3 MP, was arrested by the Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Detective Branch on Monday. On Tuesday, a court remanded him to five-day police custody. There are 11 human trafficking cases — six cases against him in Feni district and five in Dhaka Metropolitan area, police said.

Why 7 stolen dogs in China became superheroes on social media

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Seven stolen dogs in north-eastern China escaped the clutches of thieves, then walked 17 km on highways and grasslands over two days to find their homes, fashioning a real-life version of Hollywood classics like 'Lassie Comes Home' and delivering a much-needed heartwarming tale in times of war and misery.

The motley bunch of canines, who became overnight stars on social media, were being transported on a truck to the dog meat market when they got away on the Chanshuang Expressway in Jilin province. On Tuesday, clips of the dogs walking together on the highway went viral on social media.

@kodaeleven/X

The motley bunch of canines, who became stars on social media, were being transported on a truck to the dog meat market when they got away on the Chanshuang Expressway

It wasn't just a breakout. In a touching tale of brotherhood, the pack also protected an injured German shepherd, while a Corgi, a herding dog, led the ragtag unit. Hong Kong-based newspaper, South China Morning Post, reported that the group also included Golden Retrievers, Labradors and Pekinese dogs.

The incident was first recorded on March 16 by a netizen, Lu, although the story became global only on Tuesday. "They resemble a band of little brothers in distress, moving in unison – nothing like stray dogs," Lu was quoted as saying by South China Morning Post to Dahe Daily, a prominent Chinese newspaper in Henan province.

Apparently, Lu tried on several occasions to steer the bunch to safety, but they ignored him.

Bitter Coffee Stray Dog Base, a local animal rescue organisation of volunteers, reported that the dogs belong to the same village, often play together and have forged friendships. On March 19, a volunteer informed Jimu News, a China media company, that the magnificent seven had returned to the three different households they were stolen from. A few dog meat restaurants still operate in China and cities like Changchun, Harbin, and Dalian have reported numerous incidents of pet dogs being stolen, South China Morning Post further reported. The thieves are yet to be caught. In China, dog theft is a criminal offence.

US court OKs lawsuit over mass F-1 visa revocations to proceed against agencies

Lubna Kably | TNN

It was in end-March last year, that **TOI** broke the story of international students waking up to emails from US agencies of their F-1 visa revocation and/or termination of SEVIS records.

A year later, a US district court (Massachusetts) allowed a lawsuit challenging the mass revocation of international student visas and termination of SEVIS records to move forward. This development could have major implications for foreign students (at 3.6 lakh, Indian students were the largest contingent as per the Open Doors Report for 2024-25) and for American educational institutions.

Judge Patti B Saris, rejected the Trump administration's attempt to dismiss the case filed by Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration (Alliance) and Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts (AICUM).

According to the court order, immigration authorities ran the names of about 1.3 million international students through a criminal records database, resulting in roughly 6,400 matches, including students with minor infractions such as speeding tickets or no criminal history. Visas were then revoked in bulk and SEVIS records terminated, sometimes without notice to students or their universities.

The lawsuit alleges that the US Department of State (DOS) revoked visas based solely on database matches, without individual review, and that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) terminated SEVIS records using the same criteria. Although many SEVIS records were later restored, the revoked visas were not reinstated, and the court noted that govt has not ruled out using similar termination policies in the future.

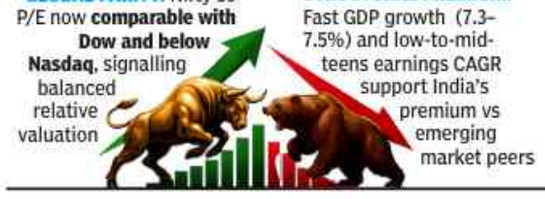
The court allowed the core claims to proceed, including challenges to: DOS's policy of revoking student visas based on database matches without individualised assessment; the policy of the department of homeland security of terminating SEVIS records based on those revocations; and ICE's policy guidance authorising such terminations of SEVIS records without notice-and-comment rulemaking.

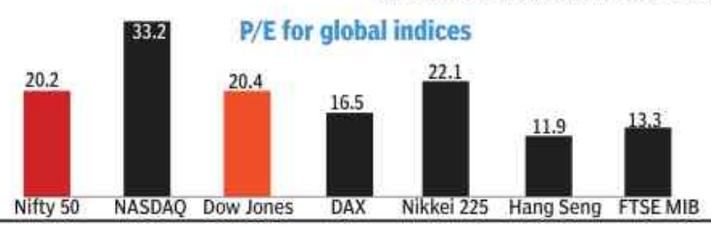
TIMES BUSINESS

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2026

VALUATIONS COOL, INDIA PREMIUM STORY INTACT

Nifty50 P/E (price-to-earnings ratio) has **corrected to nearly 20x, now broadly aligned with global peers,** while structural growth drivers continue supporting premium valuations


GLOBAL PARITY: Nifty 50 P/E now comparable with Dow and below Nasdaq, signalling balanced relative valuation
STRUCTURAL PREMIUM: Fast GDP growth (7.3–7.5%) and low-to-mid-teens earnings CAGR support India's premium vs emerging market peers



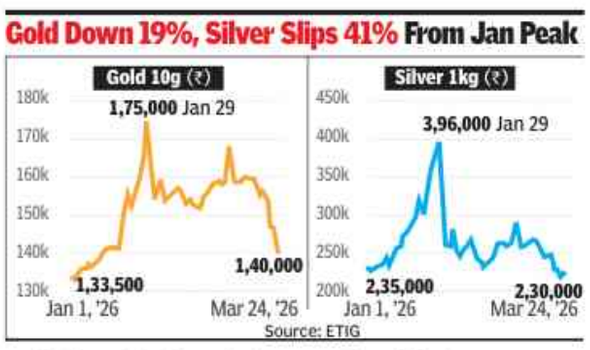
Metals melt as West Asia war rages on

Gold, Silver Prices Crash As Conflict Elevates Inflation Risk, Dollar Appreciates

Partha.Sinha@timesofindia.com

Mumbai: The accepted wisdom, for years, was that global uncertainties and inflation would drive the prices of precious metals northward. The war in West Asia is challenging that direction of causality.

Despite heightened global uncertainties and fear of oil-price-led inflation, the price of the two precious metals—gold and silver—have slid southward. And market players and analysts said that the changing global market and economic structure that slowed down de-dollarisation moves compared to the pre-war period, as well as fear of rising rate of interest due to higher inflation is pulling down prices of these two precious metals. In addition, several of the central banks, that were buyers of the yellow metal for months, have started selling. And in the case of silver, slowdown in industrial demand is a factor that's weighing down prices, market players said.



Consider this: Since the war started, the price of gold in the local market has fallen 12% to about Rs 1.4 lakh/10 grams while silver is down 14% to Rs 2.3 lakh/kg. In the international market, gold is down 16.5% to $4,367/ounce (Oz) while silver is now at $68.5/Oz.

The slide is even more sharp if we consider their all-time peak prices, recorded end-Jan this year. In the domestic market, gold has lost 19% while silver is down 41%. And in the international markets, gold has shed 20% and silver 42%. According to a local fund manager, for the past couple of years there has been a de-dollarisation wave, meaning economies trying to move away from dollar as the primary currency for international trade. This in turn led to a slide in the price of dollar, reflected in the slide in the dollar index, an index that shows the price of dollar against a basket of major currencies.

Since Sept 2022, from a high of 114, dollar index had fallen to a low of 97 by mid-Feb this year. With precious metals all priced in dollars, this resulted in prices of these metals being cheaper in other major currencies, leading to higher demand and rising prices. "The war has slowed down the de-dollarisation move," said the fund manager. "Also war has raised the spectre of inflation that in turn could lead to a higher rate of interest. Large buyers of precious metals keep their holdings in warehouses, paying the rents with borrowed money. With prospects of higher interest rates on the horizon, warehouse rents would also rise and hence some profit taking by selling part of their holdings which were in profit," the fund manager said.

There are analysts who are also indicating these factors for the recent bearish sentiment in precious metals. According to a note by Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst, Commodity & Currency, LKP Securities, despite some recent gains in precious metals, the upside remains capped as the broader macro environment is still not supportive. "Despite temporary relief, markets continue to factor in inflation risks from elevated crude prices and uncertainty around interest rate trajectory, which keeps gold sentiment fragile."

For silver, which in the domestic market has lost over 40% from its all-time peak in late-Jan, a slide in industrial demand due to the war is also a factor, analysts said.

Back to India? Check your remote-work taxes

Temporary Relocation Too Can Make Income Taxable | Implications Depend On Residency

Lubna.Kably@timesofindia.com

Mumbai: Airports across India are seeing professionals arriving from West Asia, with laptops in tow, ready to work remotely – away from the war clouds. But the relocation, even if temporary, raises a question few consider immediately: what happens to their tax status if they work from India?

India tax implications depend largely on the residential status, determined by the number of days spent in the country during a financial year and also during the preceding years. A person may remain a non-resident for tax purposes yet still find part of their income taxable in India if services are performed while physically present here. In some cases, being a foreign citizen can also make a difference.

Consider the case of 'A', who has been working in the UAE for several years and drawing a tax-free salary in Dubai. He arrived in India in mid-Feb for a short visit, but due to uncertainty in the region, his employer allowed him to work remotely from India for a few weeks.

Under the Income-Tax Act, an individual becomes resident if he stays in India for 182 days or more in a financial year, or for 60 days in that year and 365 days in the preceding four years. Ameet Patel, chief risk partner at Manohar Chowdhry & Associates, said, "For Indian citizens and Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) who are outside India and who come on a visit to India, the 60-day limb is generally relaxed so that only the 182-day test applies, unless their Indian-sourced income exceeds Rs 15 lakh. In such cases, the 60-day threshold is replaced by 120 days combined with the 365-day requirement over the preceding four years."

COUNT YOUR DAYS HERE, PAY ACCORDINGLY

Status	Condition	Tax incidence in India
Resident (ROR) **Typical situation:** Persons living in India long-term	≥182 days in India in FY OR 60 days in FY + 365 days in last 4 years (Relaxation available for Indian citizen or PIO visiting India for short-term)	Global income is taxable
Resident but Not Ordinarily Resident (RNOR) **Typical situation:** Recent returnees to India	Qualifies as resident (above conditions are met) BUT not resident in 9 of last 10 years OR stayed <730 days in last 7 years	**India income taxable + foreign income from business controlled in India** (Salary earned for remote work done while in India is taxable)
Non-resident **Typical situation:** Working or living overseas	Does not meet the conditions set in residency test	**India income taxable** (Salary earned for remote work done while in India is taxable)

Short-stay exemption benefits of relevant tax treaties can be applied which would exempt salary earned for remote work from Indian tax

Since A will stay in India for less than 182 days during fiscal 2026, he will remain a non-resident. However, income that accrues or arises in India is taxable even for non-residents. Because he is rendering services while physically in India, the salary relating to that period may be treated as income earned in India and taxed here.

If he were a foreign citizen, the scenario would be different. Section 10(6)(vi) of the I-T Act provides a specific exemption for salary received by individuals who are not citizens of India for services rendered during a short stay in the country, provided certain conditions are met. Viz: The employer is not engaged in any business in India; the individual's stay in India does not exceed 90 days during the relevant financial year; and remuneration is not deductible from the employer's income chargeable to tax in India, if any.

However, where the I-T Act appears to make income taxable, relief may still be available under tax treaties including those with the UAE and the US, which provide for 'short stay exemption'.

"It is important to recognise that exposure under the I-T Act arises in the first instance, and the treaty protection must then be invoked to mitigate double taxation," said Patel.

He added: "Returning Indians should be aware of the deemed residency rule. Even a short stay could result in an Indian citizen being a resident but not ordinarily resident (RNOR) if his/her India-income is Rs. 15 lakh or more." As RNORs, their Indian-sourced income remains taxable in India, while their foreign income generally continues to remain outside the Indian tax net, subject to limited exceptions.

Mkts see volatility as tensions persist

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Conflicting and confusing messages relating to the war in West Asia kept Dalal Street traders busy on Tuesday with hopes of a quick resolution to the crisis in the Gulf stood much diluted compared to what it was on Monday evening. As a result, sensex opened sharply higher but selling soon followed.

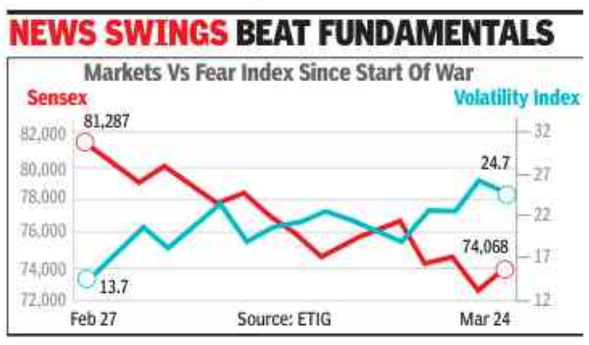
In the international markets, crude prices started rising again, which also dampened investor sentiment and the rupee weakened. At the close of a volatile session and aided by a late surge, sensex closed 1,372 points (1.9%) up at 74,068 points. On the NSE, nifty too showed a similar trend and closed 400 points (1.8%) up at 22,912 points.

On Monday evening, after the US president Donald Trump said the US and Iran had started talking and indicated a probable resolution to the conflict in West Asia, markets around the world reacted positively. In India, the GIFT nifty rallied over 3%, rupee strengthened against the dollar and crude oil prices crashed over 10% at one point. However, as doubts about such a move surfaced, markets reacted negatively.

According to Viram Shah, co-founder & CEO, Vested Finance, markets were clearly positioned for escalation, not resolution and the day's moves showed how quickly that pricing can reverse. "What this tells us is simple: Markets are currently trading headlines, not fundamentals. Even a hint of de-escalation is enough to unwind extreme positioning across energy and equities," he said. Shah said that the current global market situation remains fluid, as supply disruptions and uncertainty around the Strait of Hormuz are still unresolved. "For investors, this is a reminder: Markets tend to overshoot both on fear and relief."

In Tuesday's market, foreign funds continued to sell aggressively in the stock market with the net outflow at Rs 8,010 crore, BSE data showed. With this outflow, March's total net selling is at a little over Rs 1.1 lakh crore, a record peak figure for any single month ever.

The day's rally added about Rs 7.5 lakh crore to investors' wealth with BSE's market capitalisation now at Rs 422.8 lakh crore, official data showed.



₹ gains 12 paise after 3-day record low

Mumbai: The rupee closed at 93.86, up 12 paise on mixed geopolitical signals, snapping a three-day record-low run. Pressure on the currency eased as international oil prices cooled with Brent crude near $100 versus its $114 peak last week. Equities were up around 1%–2%, while the yield on the 10-year bond also eased. "Despite some positive signals on de-escalation, the currency remains under pressure amid sustained global uncertainty," said Jateen Trivedi, analyst with LKP Securities. TNN

Beer, alcohol cos cite cost pressure

New Delhi: Beer makers on Tuesday warned of supply disruptions this summer due to cost increase and inadequate availability of packing material, while Indian alcohol makers have asked states to revise prices of Indian Made Foreign Liquor, citing price pressures. The Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies said a weaker rupee, along with higher cost of packing material and fuel and transport costs, are putting pressure on the industry.

Brewers Association of India said in last three weeks the conflict has pushed up costs by 10-12%. "Glass bottles prices have risen by approximately 20%, paper cartons have increased by almost 100%, and cost of materials have gone up 20-25%. Freight and logistics costs have also risen by 10%," it said. Glass bottle supplies are hit due to LNG shortage, while aluminium shortage is affecting availability of cans, it added. TNN

Euler Motors raises ₹437.5 crore

Bengaluru: Euler Motors, an electric commercial vehicle maker focused on cargo mobility, has raised Rs 437.5 crore in a funding round led by Lightrock, with participation from existing investors Hero MotoCorp and Blume Ventures. The round also includes Rs 250 crore in debt from BlackSoil, Trifecta Capital, InnoVen Capital and Alteria Capital. TNN

Swiggy raises platform fee

Bengaluru: Online food ordering is set to get marginally costlier, with Swiggy increasing the platform fee it charges users to Rs 17.5 per order, according to details visible on its app on Tuesday. The revision comes shortly after rival Zomato raised a similar charge. TNN

Maruti lines up ₹10k cr for new Gujarat plant

New Delhi: Maruti Suzuki on Tuesday approved investment of Rs 10,189 crore to add capacity of 2.5 lakh vehicles per year at its upcoming manufacturing facility in Gujarat, as the country's largest carmaker looks to meet growing domestic demand including exports. TNN

FMCG cos plan to hike prices, cut grammage

Asmita.Dey@timesofindia.com

Mumbai: Your next bottle of soft drink could cost you more and chances are that you will get lesser value out of the pack of biscuits or chips you buy. Consumer goods companies are implementing a mix of selective price hikes and grammage cuts to pass on some of the steep rise in input costs to consumers.

Some firms are also looking at the option of smaller packs to make products more accessible for consumers. The West Asia conflict, which has now entered its fourth week, has triggered a surge in crude oil prices, shooting up raw material costs for companies. Crude oil has a direct bearing on packaging and logistics costs. Besides, crude derivatives are also used to manufacture several household products. "Some price corrections were already overdue over the past two years. Given the current environment, we have advanced this decision and will be implementing selective price increases effective April 1.

In certain larger SKUs (stock keeping units), the increase may be slightly higher as there was some flexibility available through trade margin adjustments," said Nikhil Doda, co-founder and chief operating officer at Lahori Zeera.

Parle Products is looking to take selective price actions or grammage adjustments, said chief marketing officer Mayank Shah. "A more immediate and critical concern at this stage is the availability of fuel itself. It is important that policymakers differentiate between industrial users, with priority given to sectors linked to essential commodities like food to ensure there is no disruption in supply," Shah said.

Dabur will take price hikes wherever necessary, a company spokesperson said without sharing additional details. For FMCG companies, which had been betting on GST cuts to spur consumption after a long spell of sluggishness, the war risks slowing the pace of demand recovery just when revival was in sight. Firms had underlined improving consumption trends in their Q3 earnings. AWL Agri Business is pushing a wide range of pack sizes to the retail shelves starting from 200 ml. "If inflationary pressures continue, smaller pack sizes may help consumers manage their monthly household budgets more efficiently," said MD & CEO Shrikant Kanhere.

"Household staples from soaps to packaged foods face margin pressure as petrochemical inputs rise. FMCG firms are weighing price hikes vs pack reduction–balancing margin protection with consumer demand," said analysts at The Knowledge Company, who estimate packaging costs to have surged by 15%-20% on higher crude.

CRUDE COST

- Some firms are weighing the option of smaller packs
- Raw material costs have increased after surge in crude oil prices
- Packaging costs have surged by **15-20%** on higher crude, say some analysts

Manipal Health files DRHP with Sebi for ₹8,000 crore IPO

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Manipal Health Enterprises has filed its draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) with market regulator Sebi to raise funds through an initial public offering (IPO).

The proposed IPO comprises a fresh issue of equity shares aggregating up to Rs 8,000 crore and an offer-for-sale (OFS) of up to 43.2 million shares by promoters, including Imperius Healthcare Investments and Manipal Education and Medical Group India. The face value of each share is Rs 2. The company plans to utilise Rs 5,378 crore from the fresh issue towards repayment or prepayment of borrowings of its material subsidiary, Manipal Hospitals. Around Rs 574 crore will be used to acquire a minority stake in its step-down subsidiary, Sahyadri Hospitals, with the remainder earmarked for general corporate purposes. Manipal Health may also consider a pre-IPO placement of up to Rs 1,600 crore. If undertaken, the size of the fresh issue will be reduced accordingly.

The offer will be made through the book-building route, with up to 50% of the net offer reserved for qualified institutional buyers, at least 15% for non-institutional investors, and a minimum of 35% for retail investors. Manipal Health operates a pan-India network of multispecialty hospitals, offering services ranging from outpatient care to advanced tertiary and quaternary treatments. As of Sept 30, it operated 38 hospitals (48 on a pro forma basis) with 10,761 licensed beds (12,367 on a pro forma basis) across 14 states and union territories.

IPO proceeds to reduce debt, acquire Sahyadri stake and strengthen pan-India multispecialty hospital expansion strategy

In Nov, the company commenced operations at its 49th hospital in Bengaluru, taking its total licensed bed capacity to 12,631 as of Dec last year. Regionally, the company has a strong presence in Karnataka, Maharashtra and Goa, and eastern India (including West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand and Sikkim). Following the acquisition of Sahyadri Hospitals last year, Manipal Health added 1,606 licensed beds to its network. The company served 3.9 million patients in the six months ended Sept 2025 and 7.2 million patients in FY25 (both on a pro forma basis).

Revenue from operations stood at Rs 4,713 crore for the six months ended Sept 2025, with a net profit of Rs 571.8 crore. For FY25, revenue rose to Rs 8,242.2 crore from Rs 4,839.6 crore in FY23, while net profit increased to Rs 1,081.6 crore from Rs 414.2 crore. Between FY23 and FY25, Manipal Health Enterprises recorded a revenue CAGR of 30.5%. In FY25, the company reported the second-highest revenue from operations among private hospital chains in India on a pro forma basis at Rs 9,263.6 crore.

Cognizant Chennai headcount down by 10k

Shilpa.Phadnis @timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: Cognizant's Chennai delivery centre headcount has declined from around 81,000 to about 71,000, as hiring momentum shifts to cities such as Indore, Bhubaneswar, Hyderabad and Visakhapatnam, where stronger digital and BPO penetration is driving growth.

The reduction of 10,000 employees at its India headquarters marks a significant drop in overall headcount. Within Tamil Nadu, Coimbatore remains a key secondary hub with about 16,000 employees. For over three decades, Cognizant's Chennai base has been central to job creation in the state's IT sector. The moderation in headcount could draw attention ahead of the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, where employment generation and the state's competitiveness in attracting large technology investments are expected to be key issues. An email sent to Cognizant didn't elicit a response till press time.

India continues to account for about 90% of Cognizant's total delivery centre space. Within the country, Chennai remains its largest hub with around 7 million sft, followed by Hyderabad (3 million sft), Pune (2 million sft), Kolkata (2 million sft) and Bengaluru (2 million sft). However, Chennai's footprint has declined from 8 million sft to 7 million sft over the past year.

Last year, Cognizant sold a 13.6-acre property in Thoraipakkam for Rs 612 crore, a site that had served as a key base for over two decades. The company is also expanding elsewhere, with plans to set up a new campus on a 22-acre site at Kapuluppada IT Hills in Visakhapatnam.

Early adopters gain more value from AI: Report

Bengaluru: Artificial intelligence is reaching a broader user base, but those deriving the greatest value continue to be early adopters who have consistently used the technology. That is a key takeaway from the latest Economic Index report by Anthropic, which tracks usage patterns of its Claude models. The report shows that usage on Claude.ai is becoming less concentrated. In Feb, the top 10 tasks accounted for 19% of traffic, down from 24% in Nov 2025. According to Anthropic, this reflects a familiar trend: early users tend to focus on narrower, high-value applications such as coding, while newer users bring a broader mix of everyday tasks. TNN

External firms to examine resignation, board discussions

▶ Continued from page 1

In an interview to TOI on Sunday, HDFC Bank MD and CEO Sashidhar Jagdishan had said that he was open to a probe either by a panel with independent members or by an independent agency.

While the bank did not name the law firms, those familiar with the discussions said that Trilegal, Wadia Ghandy & Co and an international entity are the likely names. Chakraborty, a former economic affairs secretary and a long-serving independent director on the bank's board, stepped down from his role as part-time chairman, stating that certain practices at the bank over the past two years were "not in congruence with his personal values and ethics." While the resignation letter did not cite specific incidents or allege wrongdoing, the phrasing raised immediate concerns among investors and analysts, sparking speculation over governance standards and boardroom dynamics.

The cryptic nature of the exit weighed on sentiment in the stock and prompted calls from institutional investors for greater transparency.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India also indicated that it would review the developments, further intensifying scrutiny around the bank's governance framework and disclosure practices.

The firms have been tasked with submitting their findings within a reasonable timeframe. The scope of the review is expected to include examination of the resignation letter, contemporaneous board minutes and related documentation, rather than a full-scale forensic or criminal probe. By commissioning an external legal assessment, the board is seeking to demonstrate that it is not relying solely on internal processes and is willing to subject the episode to independent scrutiny.

IS **AI RESHAPING** THE WORLD

ORIGINAL THINKING WILL BE THE MOST PROFITABLE SKILL

AI will make information cheaper but insight more expensive. With everyone accessing the same tools, data and patterns, original thinking will become the rarest and possibly the most profitable skill in investing. The future of investing will belong to those who can combine their own experience and instincts with tech. Machines can amplify our ability to see but not necessarily what to see. Judgment still matters, and original thinking will continue to separate those who succeed from those who follow. Those who keep growing their skills, think independently and see technology as an enabler will build an edge that lasts. When speed and access are no longer barriers, the real challenge is having clear thinking and the courage to act. Technology can filter out the noise and make things smoother but it can't teach conviction. That will always be a human advantage and what separates those who simply participate from those who truly succeed.

Tejas Khoday | CO-FOUNDER & CEO, FYERS

iToons Ajit Ninan & Sunil Agarwal

AI Career Edge PODCAST

How Colleges Can Build AI-Ready Talent

Live on YouTube. Scan the QR or go to the URL to set a reminder

Prof V Ramgopal Rao
VICE-CHANCELLOR, BITS PILANI

FRIDAY Mar 27, 12 noon

Event page link: https://bit.ly/Alcareeredge4

Why govt & Indian enterprise must buy from local deeptechs

Many startups are competitive, but India Inc waits for foreign endorsement

Sujit John & Akhil George | TNN

Indian deeptech ventures have a very real problem. We have heard this from many for a long time, but it's a particularly big problem now when there's so much talk about the importance of tech sovereignty in the age of AI and quantum. The latter are foundational technologies, and especially given the growing geopolitical rifts, getting these technologies from others may be difficult.

The deeptech problem is this: Their technologies take time to develop and mature. And that means they need enough funds to take them through this longish period. Traditional venture capital (VC) does not yet have the confidence to make such investments. So, govt needs to step in. The Centre has stepped in with the Rs 10,000-crore Startup India Fund of Funds, and the Rs 50,000-crore ANRF (Anusandhan National Research Foundation). These help, though some say they are not being directed as well as they should be.

The bigger problem is – and we had a discussion on this a few days ago – these ventures need buyers for their products, buyers who can then become reference points for other potential buyers. In several countries, and especially in the US and parts of Europe, their govts and large enterprises are willing to experiment with these completely new products. In India, they just don't.

"There's a lack of confidence in our own ability. And we don't have an early adopter culture for technology," said Atul Batra, a startup advisor who previously was with Algonomy Manthan, Yahoo, Motorola and Sun Microsystems. Some sectors like BFSI, retail, telecom have done well in terms of embracing new technology, but it's foreign brands they adopt, not Indian. "And procurement is designed for the slow track, not the faster, innovative track," he said.

Ravi Bulusu, CEO & co-founder of Enmovil, a supply chain and logistics intelligence platform, said many organisations default to global vendors simply because they are familiar and are perceived as lower risk. "Then there is the trust and the reference gap. Even when Indian products are competitive, decision-makers are always like 'who else is using it at scale'. It's a chicken and egg thing," he said, indicating that you need a customer to get other customers, but then how do you get that first customer!

GOVT MUST CHAMPION INDIAN INNOVATION

"In countries that have successfully led innovation, be it Israel, South Korea, US, govts play an extremely important role as early adopters of innovation. They are major customers. Funding startups is one part. But eventually, every startup success is measured by how it scaled and grew, which means how much business it got. Help with that. Also, incentivise major corporates to adopt homegrown technologies by, say, partly funding that purchase.

Ravi Bulusu | CEO & CO-FOUNDER, ENMOVIL

The Indian CIO thinks if it's an India made product, it has to be cheap. Our product license fee was $50,000. There was this mining company that wanted to know if we could give it for Rs 5,000. They said they could get two interns to build it for themselves. That's a big stumbling block for innovative startups – corporates think anything can be built.

Aruna Schwarz | FOUNDER & CEO, STELAE TECHNOLOGIES

While we have got good traction from the department of public health, hospitals are slow to adopt technology. They are extremely comfortable with their current patient care workflow, and it's very difficult for them to change it disruptively. For innovative startups, going from pilot to large-scale adoption is always a very slow process and that is where we require govt support. That is a huge gap. If that could be solved, most of the innovative companies would do really well.

Sharmila Devadoss | MD & FOUNDER, MEDLOTEK HEALTH SYSTEMS

Indian govt needs to become an early adopter of made-in-India tech, especially now with tech sovereignty becoming very critical, given tech like AI, quantum, robotics. Countries that will be most powerful will be the ones that control the foundations of these technologies. Govt must provide procurement preferences for innovative startups. They must provide certification badges – an India-grade assurance sort of thing. And they must champion India stars – the way US championed Qualcomm and Intel in the past, and Nvidia now.

Atul Batra | STARTUP ADVISOR, FORMER CTO, ALGONOMY MANTHAN

Foreign endorsement helps

Aruna Schwarz, founder & CEO of Bengaluru-based Stelae Technologies – which converts unstructured data from formats like PDFs and Word docs into structured, searchable, and usable data – did not face too much of a problem only because her CTO was a Frenchman. And France, Aruna said, is very innovation friendly and willing to experiment. The government offers a variety of grants. "For example, if you hire an engineer from a top-level school, you get the highest amount of grant just to fund him for two years so that he doesn't have to worry about things like how to pay his rent, and instead can focus on innovating," she said.

As it turned out, the CTO helped find customers in France, and very soon, they also had Rolls-Royce of the UK buying their software for their military engines business. And once that, the Indian market opened up, especially the defence market. "It's unfortunate but true, that if you have a big non-Indian customer, your acceptance level in Indian enterprises goes up from 0 to 99%," Aruna said.

On the other hand, it's not been easy for Sharmila Devadoss, founder & MD of MedloTek Health Systems, which has developed what could be India's first cuffless BP device, where you get blood pressure from the fingertip. Such devices have extremely long gestation periods, and they are at the cutting edge of technology, with deep tech algorithms coming into play. India, Sharmila said, just doesn't have the funding ecosystem to support such innovations.

MedloTek has managed so far thanks to govt grants, and being selected by the govt as a solution for Covid-19 management, and by the Tamil Nadu public health department for screening people in Madurai. "But to scale it from there has been a challenge," she said, noting that hospitals are particularly slow to adopt technology.

Partner, co-create, endorse

Ravi said giving business to startups is much better than just giving money – and govt and India Inc should both do that. Aruna said govt should not hesitate to endorse great startup products. That would be a big signal to India Inc, and foreign customers.

Sharmila said govt and India Inc should identify problem statements, and then identify new-age companies that can help co-create solutions. Atul said the ecosystem should come together to create structured engagement programmes for startups. It could be PoC (proof-of-concept) programmes, innovation labs. "The whole mindset and orchestration has to change for tech sovereignty," he said.

This startup built a photonic chip fit for AI

Akhil.George
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The AI boom has exposed a problem: moving data, not processing it, is fast becoming the biggest constraint for our unquenchable AI needs. As models grow larger and more complex, thousands of chips must work together, constantly exchanging vast amounts of information. That data movement is a problem LightSpeed Photonics set out to solve years before the current AI surge.

"We saw this coming early," said Rohin Y, founder and chief executive of LightSpeed Photonics.

Founded in 2020, LightSpeed Photonics operates out of Singapore, where it leads advanced technology collaborations, and Hyderabad, where its core R&D, design, simulation and testing teams are based. The company is also preparing to expand into the US for business development. This distributed footprint reflects both the complexity of its technology and the global nature of the ecosystem it relies on.

Rohin's insight into the data bottleneck comes from his background in high-performance computing. While working on large-scale scientific simulations during his PhD, he saw first-hand how systems struggled to move data across thousands of processors. "Even back then, I realised that interconnects — not compute — were slowing everything down," he said.

That challenge has only intensified with AI. Modern models are trained and run across clusters of machines, with terabytes of data constantly being shared. "These are no longer single-machine problems," Rohin said. "Every processor needs fast access to data stored across the system. If that exchange is slow, everything slows down."

Traditional approaches are struggling to keep up. Copper connections, once the backbone of data centre communication, cannot scale to the speeds and efficiencies required. Even existing optical solutions — which use light instead of electricity — face limitations in size, power consumption and how closely they can be integrated with chips.

LightSpeed's approach is to rethink the interconnect entirely, using photonics — the science of manipulating light — to move data faster and more efficiently. But the real innovation lies in how the company has engineered that capability into an ultra-compact device.

"The requirement was clear," Rohin said. "We needed extremely high bandwidth, very low latency, low power consumption, and a form factor small enough to sit right next to the compute chip."

Achieving all of that in a single product took five years of deep engineering work. The result is a fingernail-sized photonic interconnect capable of transmitting 400 gigabits per second — significantly smaller, faster and more energy-efficient than conventional modules used in data centres today.

Technical challenges

Building it required solving multiple technical challenges at once. Inside the device are tiny lasers that convert electrical signals into light, detectors that convert light back into electrical signals, and specialised electronics to control and process the data. All of these components must work seamlessly together within an extremely small footprint.

"It's not just one technology," Rohin explained. "You're combining photonics, electronics, materials science and precision packaging into a single system. Everything has to align at a very high level of accuracy."

That precision — down to fractions of a human hair — is achieved through what is known as advanced semiconductor packaging. Because this capability is still developing in India, LightSpeed partnered with collaborators in Singapore and other parts of Asia to build its early prototypes and refine the technology.

At the same time, the company invested heavily in building its own talent. "We had to train people from scratch," Rohin said. "This is a specialised field, and there isn't a ready-made workforce for it. Our team learned by working closely with global experts and partners."

The engineering effort extended beyond just shrinking the device. One of the key breakthroughs was bringing the optical conversion as close as possible to the processor. "The closer you are to the compute, the lower the latency and the better the efficiency," Rohin said.

This proximity reduces the distance data must travel as electrical signals — which are slower and consume more power — before being converted into light. The result is faster communication between chips and lower overall energy usage.

The timing of this innovation is critical. Interconnects are rapidly becoming one of the largest power consumers in data centres. "They could account for nearly 40% of power consumption," Rohin noted. As AI workloads scale, improving efficiency in data movement is essential to keeping costs and energy use under control.

LightSpeed is now moving from development to deployment. The company recently launched its product and is working with major players in the AI and high-performance computing ecosystem on pilot projects, with commercial rollouts expected to follow.

DEEP TECH STARTUP

"The real challenge in AI is no longer just compute, it is data movement. You have thousands of processors exchanging massive volumes of data in real time, and if that communication is inefficient, the entire system slows down. What we've built is a tiny photonic interconnect that uses light instead of electricity to move data faster, with far lower power, right next to the compute.

Rohin Y | FOUNDER, CEO, LIGHTSPEED PHOTONICS

From Sweden to Bengaluru – living the change journey

Maria Ebbesson

As a young woman I took the leap to move from my home village on the island of Gotland in Sweden into a totally new town to start my engineering education. That first day, in Gothenburg, on the Swedish west coast, I had to figure out the basics; how to pay on the tram and where to find the gathering location for all the new students.

Never did I imagine that I, many years later, would start a career at Volvo Group which would take me and my family to many countries around the globe – from the US to China and now to India.

Change always sounds inspiring in hindsight and most of us are inspired by the experiences of other people – but living through that same change can be uncomfortable, frustrating and even lonely. I've had moments when I questioned whether I had made the right decision – especially when my family and I were adapting to new environments. But those moments also built resilience.

It's humbling to realise that leadership doesn't look the same everywhere. What remains constant, though, is intent: the desire to connect, to build trust, do something better and to move forward together.

Many of our engineering teams go through similar changes when working together on a global basis. We all have our company history, culture, personal and professional background that shape who we are and how we behave. Sometimes, many things that we take for granted get challenged by a team having different experiences and ways of working. In my experience, as a team, it requires a lot of dedication and commitment to build common ground; but with clear objectives, building new relations, creating a platform of understanding and persistence, opportunities will start to arise. In the end, the two teams will achieve more just because they have a larger spread of experience, competence and best practices to pull from.

Global assignments have taught me that leadership is less about having a uniform way of working and more about weaving together our differences into something stronger.

Looking back at my younger self, moving to the big city with all its opportunities and hurdles, I might simply tell myself – there's a whole lot of change awaiting you, but you're going to relish all of it, and fully embrace change for your own growth and that of others.

Maria Ebbesson is site head for Volvo Group Technology, and VP - Vehicle Engineering at Volvo Group India

CAREER LADDER FOR WOMEN

I started recognising patterns in every transition. The initial phase has its mix of feelings: excitement, expectation, but also butterflies for the unknown to come. Then a phase of doubt, hesitation, frustration over setbacks and misunderstandings, and then gradually growing understanding, acceptance and appreciation for the new that has come. Knowing these emotions were part of the process helped me support not only myself but also my family and my teams.

I've learned that most people don't resist change – they resist uncertainty, and they often don't voice the real concerns. And as leaders, our role is to bring clarity and compassion during that uncertainty but also confidence. Confidence that even if the future doesn't look the same as today, we'll come out wiser, more resilient and a bit humbler in the end. Change will always be part of the journey, but so will personal growth, if we allow ourselves to embrace it fully.

Leading global teams has shown me that diversity isn't just about representation – it's about learning to see through someone else's lens. I've been in meetings where my direct Swedish style felt too blunt, and others where my same Swedish style with inclusiveness and careful phrasing was read as indecisive. Every time, I had to recalibrate – not to fit in, nor to fundamentally change, but to communicate better.

Learn the fundamentals and to spot problems

Akhil George & Sujit John | TNN

AI Career Edge

The rise of artificial intelligence is not just another technology cycle; it is a platform shift that is fundamentally changing how people build, work and think. For students and young professionals, this moment offers a rare opportunity to reshape careers early, if they are willing to adapt. As Rafee Tarafdar, CTO of Infosys, told us during a recent webinar, "Every time we see a big platform shift like AI, it changes the stack, the way we interface, and the way we work."

He compares this moment to the arrival of the internet and later the cloud, both of which created entirely new industries. "We are at a similar stage with AI. This is a great time," he said, stressing that opportunities are not limited to coders alone.

For young people, **the first major shift is the democratisation of creativity.** "Today, I can create a visual, a video or a prototype quickly using simple language. Creativity is now accessible to everyone without depending on experts," Tarafdar noted. Tasks that once required teams of specialists can now be prototyped individually using AI tools. This means students should focus less on waiting for perfect skills and more on experimenting with ideas.

The second opportunity lies in entrepreneurship. "The pace at which you can build applications has reduced significantly. If you have an idea, build it, launch it, test it, improve it and repeat," he said. For Indian talent in particular, he sees a chance to move beyond services and build global software products at speed.

"This is a great time because AI is a big platform shift. It is fundamentally changing the stack and the way we work. The opportunities are significant across creativity, entrepreneurship, building and expertise. If you have ideas, build something, launch it, experiment and improve. The pace at which we can build new applications has come down significantly.

Rafee Tarafdar | CTO, INFOSYS

For those from technical backgrounds, AI expands what is possible. "We can now solve problems that were earlier too difficult to tackle," he explained. But he is clear that not everyone needs to go deep into low-level systems. Students must decide their path: either become experts working on chips, CUDA and models, or focus on building solutions. "You do not need to be an expert in everything, but you must understand the basics well enough to use the technology correctly," he said.

Beyond building, entirely new roles are emerging. These include model engineers who fine-tune AI systems for industries, data engineers who prepare and generate training data, and specialists in AI evaluation who test for bias, accuracy and security. There is also rising demand for performance engineers who optimise systems, and professionals focused on responsible AI to ensure compliance and ethics. "Opportunities are emerging across all these areas within AI," Tarafdar said.

However, technical knowledge alone will not future-proof a career. When asked what skills or traits a company like Infosys values most when hiring new candidates, Tarafdar said they look for people who understand fundamentals and can break down problems clearly. Equally important is the ability to identify problems independently. "It is not enough to execute tasks. You should be able to spot what is not working and take the initiative to fix it," he added.

Continuous learning is also non-negotiable. "You cannot define yourself by a single skill like being a Java programmer. Technology is evolving too quickly," he said, urging young professionals to keep adapting. This also requires a mindset shift. "You must be ready to unlearn and learn constantly if you want to stay relevant," he added.

Interestingly, he believes AI makes human thinking even more valuable. With the rise of agents and automation, execution can be scaled by machines, but "designing work and applying fundamental thinking should remain with humans," he said. In simple terms, students should focus on understanding problems deeply, while using AI to execute faster.

Another skill gaining importance is storytelling. "You must be able to simplify complex ideas and explain them clearly so that even a child can understand," he said. In an AI-driven world, the ability to communicate ideas may matter as much as building them.

Ultimately, building a future-proof career in AI is less about chasing specific tools and more about developing a way of thinking. Start small, apply AI to everyday problems, and build consistently. "Do not always look for big breakthroughs. Focus on doing small things well and building habits of excellence," he advised.

PHOTONICS CTRL+F(IND)

Photonics is the science and technology of generating, controlling and using light (photons). It underpins devices such as lasers, fibre-optic cables and sensors. Instead of relying on electricity alone, photonics uses light to transmit data at very high speeds with low energy loss. This makes it crucial for modern communications, including the internet. It is also used in medical imaging, manufacturing, and emerging computing systems. By manipulating light precisely, photonics enables faster, more efficient technologies and is seen as a key driver of future innovation in fields ranging from healthcare to artificial intelligence and advanced electronics.

TIMES SPORT

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2026

'RELAXED' RISHABH PANT WILL EXCEL IN SECOND YEAR AS SKIPPER: LSG COACH JUSTIN LANGER

GT BATTING COACH MATTHEW HAYDEN TO GIFT ICONIC 'MONGOOSE' BAT TO RAHUL TEWATIA

CASTING A WIDER NET

Like India's Domestic Cricket Scene, The IPL May Be Entering A Phase Where The Big Teams Don't Necessarily Get To Dominate All The Time, Enabling The Selectors To Tap Into A Bigger Talent Pool...

Arani.Basu@timesofindia.com

It's unfortunate that Shreyas Iyer misses out. It's no fault of his, nor ours. He has to wait for his chance." This was India's chief selector Ajit Agarkar while announcing the T20I squad for the Asia Cup last Aug. Iyer was still fresh from an IPL season where he scored 604 runs at a strike-rate of 174 while leading Punjab Kings to the final.

Barring Arshdeep Singh, no player from either of last edition's finalists could find a place in India's triumphant T20 World Cup team last month. The IPL is in a very interesting phase now. It has thrown up a surfeit of players that have turned India into a T20 superpower, but the earlier phase of only a few big teams dominating the league may be over.

Chennai Super Kings and Mumbai Indians — the two most successful franchises — are struggling to maintain consistency as the years roll by. In fact, the trend mirrors India's domestic cricket scene. The power centre doesn't necessarily end with Mumbai, Karnataka, Delhi or Tamil Nadu any more.

The 'lesser' state teams have found a way to make their presence felt, starting with Rajasthan, Vidarbha, Saurashtra and Gujarat leading the way. Jammu and Kashmir and Jharkhand too have made their presence felt.

In the IPL, CSK and MI's success had become templates for other franchises. Talent could be plucked from the remotest part of the country through some extensive scouting programmes run by the franchises. India's national selectors — a committee of just five former cricketers — could in turn tap the scouts of IPL teams.

Over the next two months, Agarkar's committee will closely follow the players that perform well in the IPL. Punjab Kings didn't have anybody other than Arshdeep in the World Cup team, but a close look at the makeup of the India 'A' team over the last year tells the real story. The likes of Priyansh Arya, Prabhsimran Singh, Ayush Badoni, Riyan Parag, Yudhvir Singh and Vipraj Nigam are now well-established names.

National selectors have often been accused of getting carried away by IPL performances, but former national selector claim the league is a perfect tool to gauge the temperament of younger players. TOI understands the selectors have already prepared their objectives for this IPL.

One part deals with recognising fresh talent and tracking how the products from last year are working towards achieving consistency. The other part involves keeping an eye on monitoring the core of the ODI team ahead of next year's World Cup.

For example, the selectors will have a close eye on the development of pacer Mayank Yadav and Abdul Samad from Lucknow Super Giants. But they will also see how Rishabh Pant is placed. Pant has been a part of the ODI team for the last two years and has got just one game.

Hardik Pandya's bowling fitness will also be monitored, given that he may be needed to bowl 10 overs in an ODI match in South African conditions. Parallelly, Nitish Kumar Reddy's development as a seam-bowling allrounder with Sunrisers Hyderabad becomes equally important.

The talent development network is so expansive that the selectors have access to coaches, trainers and physios of IPL teams. All of them have crossed paths with national selectors at some point in their cricketing careers. It's not just restricted to match days.

The franchises and national selectors co-exist, yet the purpose is entirely independent of each other. IPL has grown enough that national selectors don't need to restrict themselves to table toppers to spot talent.

Tarun Rawat

LOOKING TO IMPRESS: Delhi Capitals' Prithvi Shaw trains in Delhi on Tuesday

TIME TO ASK APOLLO AI

THE SLEEP LOOP

Your brain cycles through 4–6 sleep stages every 90 minutes—each vital.

Scan to get a deep sleep

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'RCB is the most popular brand in IPL'

▶ Continued from page 1

Commenting on the RCB deal, Aditya Birla Group chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla said, "Over the past two decades, IPL has morphed to become a global sporting powerhouse that has changed the face of Indian cricket, creating enormous value for India. RCB, as one of the most compelling franchises in modern sport, offers the Aditya Birla Group a distinctive platform to extend its legacy of institution-building into the arena of global sport. We are delighted to become custodians of this asset and committed to further building this extraordinary legacy."

Times Internet Ltd chairman Satyan Gajwani said, "RCB is the reigning champion and most popular brand in the IPL. As The Times of India Group, together with our partners, we will build RCB into a global sporting institution, while remaining rooted in Bengaluru and Karnataka and its incredible fanbase. We are committed to the people who built this championship-winning culture - the players, coaches, the leadership team, and the fans. We look forward to supporting the team as they take the pitch to defend RCB's title."

David Blitzer, founder, Bolt Ventures, said, "RCB has a world-class fan base, and IPL is one of the great growth stories in global sport. Having invested in clubs and leagues around the world, I believe the opportunity at RCB stands out. We look forward to working alongside our partners and BCCI to build on the franchise's championship success

Viral Patel, CEO of BXPE, said, "We are excited to invest in RCB, building on Blackstone's long-standing commitment to India. RCB stands out as one of the most popular sports franchises in the world with a powerful brand, a loyal fan base, and multiple avenues for growth. Together with our partners, we look forward to supporting the franchise's enduring legacy and continued success."

The franchise has featured some of T20's greatest icons including Virat Kohli, Chris Gayle, AB de Villiers, Shane Watson, Anil Kumble, Glenn Maxwell, Yuvraj Singh and Faf du Plessis, among others.

Kohli's rise as Team India captain and cricket's most authoritative brand coincided with RCB's rise as one of IPL's most followed teams. In 2025, Brand Finance had listed RCB as IPL's second most valuable brand after Mumbai Indians and among the three strongest IPL brands alongside Mumbai and Chennai. The same year, global investment bank Houlihan Lokey had also listed RCB as IPL's foremost brand.

RR were one of the eight original teams

▶ Continued from page 1

Somani's acquisition reflects his deep, long-term belief in the IPL's enormous growth ahead. When he first invested back in 2021, he pointed to the league's "huge potential," saying, "We see huge potential with this investment, and we are excited for the future of the IPL."

The Royals were one of the eight original IPL franchises auctioned by BCCI in early 2008 for the league's inaugural season. Led by Australian legend Shane Warne, the team pulled off a fairytale win in the first IPL season, which remains their only triumph so far. In 2021, Emerging Media increased its stake from 51% to 65%. That same year, US-based RedBird Capital Partners acquired a minority stake of nearly 15% for $37.5 million, valuing the franchise at around $250 million at the time. The team was then jointly controlled by Emerging Media Group, RedBird Capital, Lachlan Murdoch of Fox Corporation and several other minority stakeholders. In late 2025 and early 2026, the Royals initiated the process of selling the franchise, seeking a valuation north of $1 billion.

Rinku named KKR vice-captain

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kolkata: Kolkata Knight Riders on Tuesday named **Rinku Singh** as the vice-captain for the upcoming IPL season.

"Rinku will work closely with Ajinkya Rahane," KKR CEO Venky Mysore said while making the announcement at an event in the city.

Rinku has been with the franchise since 2018. The middle-order batter, known for his explosive batting, stormed into the limelight when he smashed five sixes off the last five balls to lead KKR to an improbable win over Gujarat Titans in 2023. "It feels nice to get such an opportunity," Rinku said. "I would request fans to support, even on our bad days. Hopefully we'll have the trophy in our hands this year."

PTI

T20 BASH

He was part of the India's T20 squad, which won the World Cup earlier this year. During the tournament, his father passed away.

The 28-year-old Rinku is not new to the leadership role, having captained Uttar Pradesh in domestic cricket. "I have seen Rinku grow as a leader over the years and the team depends a lot on him in many ways," head coach Abhishek Nayar said. "I am really happy to see Rinku as the vice-captain," Rahane said. "He has a great mindset."

Rinku steps into the shoes of Venkatesh Iyer, who was vice-captain last year. Having let go of Iyer, KKR management settled on Rinku.

Rahane, 37, will have the job of grooming Rinku during this season. "Rahane is cool, calm and collected," assistant coach Shane Watson said about the captain, indicating his former Rajasthan Royals teammate was the ideal person to groom the next leader.

'Impact player rule here to stay'

Allrounders can't hide their disdain for it but former India captain Sourav Ganguly said the IPL's 'Impact Player' rule was here to stay and that players would have to come to terms with it. A day after India's T20 vice-captain and Delhi Capitals captain Axar Patel said he did not like the rule as it hampered the growth of allrounders, Ganguly said despite the many opinions the rule is unlikely to be scrapped. "The 'Impact Player' rule, I think, it's going to stay. When I was the president of BCCI it had already come in. Someone will like it, someone will not," Ganguly said.

BEN DUCKETT PULLS OUT, FACES 2-YEAR BAN

Ben Duckett has decided to pull out of his IPL stint with Delhi Capitals. The England opener now faces a two-year ban from the league and auction as per the amended rules. Duckett was roped in by the Capitals for Rs 2 cr in last year's auction but he now wants to spend time at home and play red-ball cricket following a forgettable Ashes. "It was a very difficult decision and I want to apologise to everyone at Delhi that I won't be coming," Duckett told Telegraph Sport. As per the rules, overseas players who pull out of the league after being picked in the auction will face a two-year ban if they do not have a legitimate reason for withdrawing.

BEN DUCKETT

THE DC SWOT

The acquisitions made at the auction table have added depth to the Delhi Capitals squad. Here's where they stand..

Strength: Lower-middle order looks menacing. Addition of David Miller brings in experience. Tristian Stubbs, Ashutosh Sharma and skipper Axar Patel give DC enough firepower to unleash towards the end.

Weakness: Inability to deliver in crunch situations, a major reason why they have made the final only once in 18 seasons. Uncertainty regarding Aussie pacer Mitchell Starc's availability has compounded problems.

Opportunity: **Axar Patel** has the chance to showcase his tactical acumen and present his case for Team India leadership.

Threat: Mastering the Powerplay could prove to be a problem if KL Rahul's opening partner is not sorted out. Will it be Pathum Nissanka, Prithvi Shaw or Abhishek Porel? Playing too sedately at the start may prove to be a deterrent.

—Text: **Prasanth Menon**

KL RAHUL

CSK'S SPENCER JOHNSON REPLACES NATHAN ELLIS

Chennai Super Kings (CSK) have roped in Australian pacer Spencer Johnson in place of injured compatriot Nathan Ellis. Johnson, who played for Gujarat Titans and KKR previously, will join CSK for Rs 1.5 cr. The pacer has so far played 8 T20Is and 5 T20Is for Australia. Meanwhile, Kolkata Knight Riders and Sunrisers Hyderabad have named Saurabh Dubey and David Payne as replacements for the injured Akash Deep and Jack Edwards.

SPENCER JOHNSON

THE GT SWOT

After winning the title on debut in 2022 and coming within one ball of defending their title in the second season, Gujarat Titans seem to have disappointed. Here's how they stack up...

Strength: The top-order batting. Runs are expected to flow from captain Shubman Gill, B Sai Sudharsan and Jos Buttler, like always. With middle-order batter Sherfane Rutherford being traded to Mumbai Indians, the presence of Glenn Phillips, Shahrukh Khan, Rahul Tewatia and Kumar Kushagra is crucial too.

Weakness: With leggie Rashid Khan enduring one of the poorest seasons last year, the spin-bowling department, which also comprises left-arm spinner R Sai Kishore, looks thin on paper.

Opportunity: Captain Shubman Gill, ousted from India's T20 World Cup squad, wil be eager to prove his credentials all over again in this format.

Threat: Lack of Powerplay bite. Their template of taking the game deep may have outlived its utility.

—Text: **Sabu Cherian**

SHUBMAN GILL

GALLERY

ANUSHKA IN INDIA SQUAD

Anushka Sharma on Tuesday received her maiden India call-up for the five-match away Twenty 20 internatinoal series against South Africa beginning on April 17. Durban, Johannesburg and Benoni will host the series.

Squad: Harmanpreet Kaur (C), Smriti Mandhana (VC), Shafali Verma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Deepti Sharma, Richa Ghosh (WK), Arundhati Reddy, Renuka Thakur, Kranti Gaud, Sree Charani, Shreyanka Patil, Kashvee Gautam, Bharti Fulmali, Uma Chetry (WK), Anushka Sharma.

Mandhana retains 2nd spot, Harmanpreet rises to 14th: Smriti Mandhana retained her second spot while skipper Harmanpreet Kaur climbed to 14th in the latest ICC women's T20I rankings for batters released on Tuesday. Apart from Mandhana, the big-hitting Shafali Verma was the other Indian in the top 10, holding on to her sixth position while Jemimah Rodrigues remained joint 11th.

Lakshya to lead India's Thomas Cup campaign: Lakshya Sen, fresh from his All England runner-up finish, will spearhead India's challenge in the Thomas Cup, while former world champion PV Sindhu and rising star Unnati Hooda will lead the women's team in the Uber Cup next month. The Badminton Association of India named Sen, Kidambi Srikanth, HS Prannoy and the men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty. Young shuttler Ayush Shetty has earned a maiden call-up after consistent performances on the senior circuit.

The squads: Men: Lakshya Sen, Ayush Shetty, Kidambi Srikanth, H. S. Prannoy, Kiran George, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, Chirag Shetty, Hariharan Amsakarunan, M R Arjun, Dhruv Kapila. **Women:** PV Sindhu, Unnati Hooda, Tanvi Sharma, Devika Sihag, Isharani Baruah, Treesa Jolly, Gayatri Gopichand Pullela, Kavipriya Selvam, Simran Singhi, Tanisha Crasto.

ACTION TODAY

CRICKET: New Zealand vs South Africa, 5th T20I, 11.45 am (Sony, Fancode); **TENNIS:** ATP Masters Miami Open, 8.30 pm (Fancode).

Hari would take on a challenge any time

Vicky Chandhok

The tragic news of former rally champion Hari Singh losing his life in a speedboat accident in the Maldives has dealt a big blow to the Indian motorsport community and, of course, Hari's family. What really pained me was I felt like he was abandoned somewhere, for lack of a better word. It was hard to imagine what his family has endured. Nobody has yet come out with what really happened.

I last met him on Feb 8. He was here in Madras with his wife Simran for a friend's daughter's wedding and we had a great evening together.

Hari was one of those guys who would never say die. He would take on a challenge anytime and was pretty calm in most circumstances.

There are so many memories which come to mind but let me tell you the first, as the first memory is always special. Hari and his navigator Bittoo (G.S. Mann) had driven down from Chandigarh to Kodaikanal to take part in the south India Rally, which was his first attempt at national rallying. I was running the JK Tyre rally team. He arrived in his Gypsy and after we introduced ourselves to one another, we saw the condition of the car and said, "Look, this car is not going to make it." And he turned around and said, "Well, I've driven this car down from Chandigarh. I'm sure we'll finish the rally."

But the car was indeed in bad shape, so what I did was, I took him home. Karivaradhan, my late friend from Coimbatore, was in Kodi as well.

Jointly, between him, me and our mechanics, in two days we rebuilt the car completely from scratch, which is unheard of. We stripped it to the chassis, built the car and that was Hari's first National Championship victory.

This was in 1992. I would say I had the privilege and pleasure of running Hari by preparing his car and giving him vehicles which were worthy of him winning four National Championships.

Hari was one of the finest rally drivers in this country. He would somehow make sure that the car came home.

Something else I'd like to highlight — while everyone fondly calls him 'Gypsy King', Hari rallied the Gypsy, he rallied the Maruti Esteem, he rallied the Mitsubishi Cedia and also rallied the Proton in Malaysia. As far as talent goes, he had plenty.

He was also someone who would happily mentor people. Incidentally, Hari was one of four members of the Federation safety commission, of which I'm the chairman. So safety was always on his mind. That's why I can't understand why on earth these guys were on the speedboat without life jackets, because Hari was one who never compromised on safety. I've never had bad dreams in my life, but these last few days have been terrible. *(Vicky Chandhok is a former race car driver and former president of FMSCI. He spoke to* ***Rohan Alvares****)*

GS Mann (from left), Hari Singh and Vicky Chandhok after JK Tyre rally team's inaugural National Rally Championship win in 1992

Baranica breaks pole vault national record

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Chennai: Pole vaulter Baranica Elangovan from Tamil Nadu shattered the national record by leaping 4.22m and earning the gold medal in the inaugural National Indoor Athletics competition in Bhubaneswar on Tuesday. The previous national record of 4.21m was held by her statemate, Rosy Meena Paulraj, which was set in 2022.

ATHLETICS

The 29-year-old Baranica had been chasing the national record for quite some time and on Tuesday, she finally achieved it on her first attempt at that height.

Krishik, Priyanka bag gold

Karnataka bagged two gold medals through Krishik M in men's 60m hurdles and Priyanka C in women's 3000m race. Krishik clocked 7.17s to pip Rathish P (7.84s) of Reliance and Muhammed Lazan (8s) of JSW. Priyanka clocked 9:42.05s. She was followed by Kajal Rangnath (9:44.01) of Gujarat and Sushmita Tigga (10:22.3) of Odisha. Karnataka also won two silver medals through Kalyan JR (men's 800m) and Mayuri Arade (women's shot put). **Select results: Men: 800m:** 1. Mohammed Afsal (IAF, 1:47.86s), 2. Kalyan JR (Kar, 1:53.98), 3. Sayan Karmakar (Ben, 1:56.98); **60mH:** 1. Krishik M (Kar, 7.71s), 2. Rathish P (Rel, 7.84), 3. Muhammed Lazan (JSW, 8). **Women: 3,000m:** 1. Priyanka C (Kar, 9:42.05s), 2. Kajal Rangnath (Guj, 9:44.01), 3. Sushmita Tigga (Odi, 10:22.3); **Shot put:** 1. Rekha (NCOEP, 15.63m), 2. Mayuri Arade (Kar, 9.15).

ON THE HONOURS BOARD: Baranica Elangovan

SNAP SHOTS

Williams likely for India debut

Australian-born forward Ryan Williams could make his much-anticipated India debut after being named in a 23-member squad for the AFC Asian Cup 2027 Qualifier against Hong Kong on March 31 in Kochi. Williams was included in the squad after FIFA cleared his change of association, paving the way for the 31-year-old winger to represent India.

Lang to miss Norway friendly: Netherlands attacker Noa Lang will miss Friday's friendly against Norway after having surgery on his hand but could return for their match against Ecuador next week, the team said. Lang misses the first of the two World Cup warm-ups after suffering a deep cut to his right thumb during Galatasaray's Champions League match against Liverpool at Anfield last Wednesday, the Dutch football association confirmed.

Orlando City sign Griezmann: Orlando City have signed forward Antoine Griezmann from La Liga club Atletico Madrid on a contract beginning in July 2026, both clubs said on Tuesday. Griezmann, Atletico's all-time leading scorer, has agreed a deal with the Major League Soccer club that runs through the 2027-28 season, with an option for the 2028-29 campaign.

Indian women's team to play Kenya: The Indian women's football team will face hosts Kenya, while Australia will take on Malawi in the semifinals of the FIFA Series 2026 in Nairobi during the April FIFA International Women's Match Window. Both the matches will take place on April 11. "The semifinal winners and losers will clash in the final and the third-place play-off, respectively, on April 15," said an All India Football Federation (AIFF) release.

Bhowneesh leads India's challenge: Bhowneesh Mendiratta will aim to put the Paris Olympics heartbreak behind him and kick off the year on a high as he leads the Indian charge at the season-opening ISSF Shotgun World Cup in Tangier, Morocco.

India squad: Trap (men) Prithviraj Tondaiman, Kynan Chenai, Bhowneesh Mendiratta. **(women)** Kirti Gupta, Rajeshwari Kumari, Aashima Ahlawat. **Skeet: (men)** Man Singh, Jyotiraditya Singh Sisodiya, Parampal Singh. **(women)** Yashasvi Rathore, Darshana Rathore, Maheshwari Chauhan. **Mixed team:** Prithviraj Tondaiman & Kirti Gupta. Kynan Chenai & Rajeshwari Kumari.

Pistons win: Daniss Jenkins poured in a career-high 30 points, including four in the final 25 seconds, and the host Detroit Pistons ended the Los Angeles Lakers' nine-game winning streak with a 113-110 victory on Monday.

Suman powers BTM

Suman Sudhakar Dev scored two goals to power BTM Layout to a 3-2 win against Padmanabha Nagar in the second editon of the Chief Minister's Cup in Bengaluru on Tuesday. In another match, Gandhinagar scored a 5-2 win against Malleswaram.

Results: Group A: BTM Layout 3 (Suman Sudhakar Dev 29, 72-pen; AS Suhas Ebenezer 44) bt Padmanabha Nagar 2 (Jithendra Sharma 11, Anil Kumar R 74). **Group B:** Gandhinagar 5 (B Madan 13, 57; Sharan Raj 42, 53; Narendran M 55) bt Malleswaram 2 (R Pavan Prasad 67, Vishruth Hegde 88). **Today's matches: Group C:** Hebbal vs Yelahanka (2 pm), **Group D:** Yeshwanthpur vs KR Pura (4 pm).

ROUND-UP

Primrose HC prevail: Primrose Hockey Club edged past Dharwad District Hockey Association 2-1 in the KSHA 'B' division hockey league championship in Bengaluru on Tuesday. **Result:** Primrose HC 2 (Avinash R 35, Arjun 39) bt Dharwad District HA 1 (Sachin M 18). **Today's match:** Gulbarga District HA vs Primrose HC (1.30pm)

Cherie Chevalier clinches main event: Cherie Chevalier, piloted by Neeraj Rawal, trained by KSV Prasad Raju won the Telangana Plate over 1600 metres, the main event at the races in Hyderabad on Tuesday. TNN

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Dayal out, Hazlewood uncertain

Indian Left-Arm Pacer Facing Legal Issues Will Not Be A Part Of IPL This Season

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Pics: TOI/Chethan Shivakumar

TOUGH TIMES: Yash Dayal

Bengaluru: Putting speculation around Yash Dayal to rest, Royal Challengers Bengaluru's director of cricket Mo Bobat on Tuesday confirmed that the left-arm pacer will not be part of this season's IPL.

Dayal, who has been dealing with legal issues, has not joined the RCB squad, which began training at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium last week. He has also been notably absent from the franchise's social media posts, further fuelling uncertainty over his status.

Confirming his non-availability 'due to personal reasons' Bobat said, "Yash will not be joining the squad as he is going through a personal situation. We've been very supportive of Yash to date, and that's reflected in the opportunity to either retain or release players," Bobat said here during a media briefing.

The Englishman was quick to add that the franchise will not seek a replacement. "He remains under contract. We are communicating with him regularly but it has been decided that it is not in his or the franchise's best interest for him to join up with us at this point."

Dayal, who has been facing criminal charges since July last year, has stayed away from the limelight and missed the entire domestic season for Uttar Pradesh. His last competitive appearance came during the IPL final on June 4, following which he has not featured in any match. Given the fact that Dayal has been facing legal issues, RCB went into the mini auction, factoring his situation.

"Yash's situation has been tricky, because it's been going on for some time now, and it's difficult to predict what will happen. We went into our auction planning for a worst-case scenario in that he may not be available for us, and so we have recruited accordingly. We have some excellent domestic bowlers, who are potential options that could replace him," added Bobat.

Mo Bobat

HAZLEWOOD UNAVAILABLE

RCB's bowling concerns have been compounded by the continued absence of Australian quick Josh Hazlewood, who is still recovering from injury. The 35-year-old, who was the franchise's leading wicket-taker last season, has been out of action since Feb with Achilles and hamstring issues.

While Bobat stopped short of providing a definite timeline for his return, he said the franchise is closely monitoring the situation.

"Josh has missed quite a bit of cricket in recent years, so he's currently working through a return to play programme. He's doing that in Australia currently. We are liaising very closely with both Josh and Cricket Australia (CA), and our medical teams are collaborating very strongly on a day-to-day basis on his programme. We'll continue to communicate with them, and as soon as he gets to a point where CA is happy, he'll come over, and we hope to have him with us very soon," added Bobat.

RCB announce stadium tribute, safety upgrade

Times News Network

Bengaluru: Nine months after Royal Challengers Bengaluru returned home as champions, June 4 continues to cast a long shadow. The day — meant to celebrate a long-awaited triumph — is now etched in memory for the 11 lives lost outside the M Chinnaswamy Stadium during the victory celebrations.

As reported by TOI on March 23, RCB along with the Karnataka State Cricket Association, will honour the victims of the stampede.

Rajesh Menon

Players will wear jersey No. 11 during practice sessions on match days and don black armbands as a mark of respect, during their opening fixture against Sunrisers Hyderabad on Saturday.

The franchise and KSCA will permanently reserve 11 seats at the stadium in memory of the stampede victims.

"This is a tribute to our fans, who will always remain a part of our journey," RCB CEO Rajesh Menon said. Alongside remembrance, the franchise has also prioritised safety, implementing a range of enhanced crowd management measures.

"We have significantly strengthened our systems and we have invested approximately ₹7 crore to upgrade crowd management infrastructure," Menon added.

YOU READ IT HERE
Il empty seats & plaque for stampede victims at KSCA
IN PREMIER STAND
MAR 24, 2026

Last season's stumble: RCB eye fresh start at home

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CAPTAIN COOL: Rajat Patidar

Bengaluru: Defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru return to the M Chinnaswamy Stadium this season with renewed purpose — but also with an uncomfortable truth to confront: their home has not quite been the fortress they would have liked.

Despite the deafening support of the RCB faithful, the Bengaluru outfit managed just two wins from seven home games last season, losing four while one was washed out — a record that highlighted their struggles in familiar conditions even as they marched to a maiden IPL title.

This year, with five matches scheduled in Bengaluru and two 'home' fixtures shifted to Raipur, the challenge is twofold: reclaim dominance at Chinnaswamy while sustaining the momentum that powered their title-winning run.

RCB director of cricket Mo Bobat acknowledged the reality but also pointed to the intangible edge of playing in Bengaluru. "It hasn't always been the fortress we'd like it to be, and we're honest about that. But there's something special about playing here," he said.

"We didn't get it right at home early last season, but we learned quickly. The aim now is simple: Start this season the way we finished the last one," he added.

RCB's long-awaited triumph, however, was tinged with mixed emotions, as the aftermath denied the team a chance to fully celebrate a title 17 years in the making. Reflecting on the moment, Bobat said the victory carried added significance given the journey behind it.

"That title meant a lot. Franchise cricket moves quickly, but when you've been chasing something for 17 years, it carries weight. It was only my second season with the team, but you're very aware of that journey," he said.

"With someone like Virat, it's even more special. He's lived through all the highs and lows with this franchise. Seeing those emotions, along with legends like Gayle and AB being part of it,was genuinely memorable," Bobat added.

AT HOME IN RAIPUR

RCB will play two of their designated home fixtures in Raipur, which has been identified as a backup venue. Thanking the Chhattisgarh government for its support, RCB CEO Rajesh Menon said the move was facilitated by strong backing, including incentives such as GST rebates.

Addressing the shift, Bobat stressed the importance of adaptability. "I prefer building squads that can adjust to different conditions. That's one of the beauties of the IPL — every venue demands different tactics, sometimes even different combinations," he said.

"I don't have a deep understanding of Raipur yet, but we had an excellent away record last season. We'll treat these as away games and aim to be just as successful," he added.

Pics: Syed Asif

GETTING INTO THE GROOVE: Virat Kohli (left) and Phil Salt during a training session

Anahat's rise fuels Olympic hope

Seasoned Pro Joshna Believes Teen Is A Medal Prospect

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Bengaluru: At just 18, Anahat Singh already boasts a resume many players would envy. The Indian squash prodigy has two Asian Games bronze medals (2023), a World Cup gold (2025) and 16 PSA Tour titles to her name.

But her biggest breakthrough came last month when she clinched a historic PSA Bronze-level title, defeating then World No. 10 Georgina Kennedy in Washington. She followed it up with another strong showing, winning the Indian Open last week.

SQUASH

Having broken into the top 100 in Oct 2024, Anahat has surged to World No. 20 — a remarkable climb in a rankings list dominated by Egyptian players. Her steady rise augurs well for Indian squash, which currently has four men and three women in the top 100, especially with the sport set to make its Olympic debut at the 2028 Los Angeles Games.

TOI

PROMISING: Anahat Singh

Though the Olympics are still over two years away, Anahat appears firmly on track. A gold medal at the upcoming Asian Games (Sept-Oct in Japan) could secure her early qualification, while world rankings offer another pathway.

Indian squash legend **Joshna Chinappa** believes Anahat is already shaping into a serious medal contender. "Her results speak for themselves. She's doing extremely well and winning tournaments at the highest level. I see her as a medal prospect in 2028. She has a great team around her and a very good head on her shoulders. There's a lot more to come from her," Joshna said on the sidelines of an Asics event here on Tuesday.

THE OLYMPIC PUSH

The inclusion of squash in the Olympics has also given the sport a significant boost in India. Increased awareness, corporate backing and government support are beginning to make a tangible difference. "Now that squash is part of the Olympics, there's a noticeable rise in financial support, awareness and funding from both the state and central government. That's really benefiting our players," said the Padma Shri awardee. "What I received later in my career, players are now getting at 15 or 16 — and that's exactly when they need it."

For Joshna herself, now 39 and nearing the twilight of her career, the focus remains on one last big push. After a quarterfinal finish at the Indian Open, she has set her sights on the Asian Games.

"I'm at the later stage of my career, but the Asian Games is definitely on my mind. I'm trying to manage my schedule so I can stay fit and be at my best for the Games," she added.

Mbappe: Knee is 100%

French striker **Kylian Mbappe** disputed reports about the severity of the left knee sprain that has limited his availability of late for Real Madrid. "My knee is fine. It's getting better," he said at a promotional event in France on Monday. "It's going quite well, and I know there's been a lot of speculation about it and some false things have been said.

"It's the life of a top athlete, and we're used to people saying things without verifying them or having any basis in fact."

IN FOCUS

Mbappe, 27, came off the bench in Real Madrid's two most recent matches: Sunday's 3-2 La Liga defeat of Atletico Madrid and a 2-1 win at Manchester City on March 17 in the second leg of a UEFA Champions League Round of 16 match. His last appearance before that, and his most recent start, was on Feb. 21.

In 24 La Liga matches this season, Mbappe has 23 goals and four assists. REUTERS

Sinner, Sabalenka march on

Jannik Sinner and Aryna Sabalenka kept their "Sunshine Double" dreams alive with emphatic victories at the ATP/WTA Miami Open on Monday as defending men's champion Jakub Mensik joined a slew of seeds who crashed out. Sinner and Sabalenka are bidding to join an elite band of players who have won Indian Wells and the Miami Open back-to-back.

Women's world number one Sabalenka cruised into the quarterfinals with a 6-3, 6-4 demolition of China's 2024 Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen. Sinner was similarly comfortable in his third-round clash with French 30th seed Corentin Moutet, winning 6-1, 6-4 to advance to the last 16. Sinner will face unseeded American Alex Michelsen in the last 16. Michelsen defeated Chile's Alejandro Tabilo 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 earlier Monday.

MIAMI OPEN

Fourth seed Coco Gauff downed Romanian veteran Sorana Cirstea 6-4, 3-6, 6-2, while fifth seed Jessica Pegula beat another Romanian, Jacqueline Cristian 6-4, 6-1. Canada's Victoria Mboko, seeded 10, upset Russian eighth seed Mirra Andreeva 7-6 (7/4), 4-6, 6-0 to set up a quarterfinal with Czech 13th seed Karolina Muchova.

Defending champion Jakub Mensik was among the latest crop of seeds to tumble out, losing a gruelling three-setter against 19th seed Frances Tiafoe 7-6 (7/4), 4-6, 7-6 (13/11).

AFP

ON COURSE: Aryna Sabalenka

YUKI AND VENUS LOSE

India's Yuki Bhambri and his Kiwi partner Michael Venus made a first round exit following a narrow loss to John-Patrick Smith and Sander Arends. Yuki and Venus went down in a round of 32 contest to the Australian-Dutch combine in one hour 52 minutes.

Results: Men (3rd rd): 18-Francisco Cerundolo (Arg) bt 9-Daniil Medvedev (Rus) 6-0, 4-6, 7-5; 3-Alexander Zverev (Ger) bt Marin Cilic (Cro) 6-2, 5-7, 6-4; Terence Atmane (Fra) bt 7-Felix Auger-Aliassime (Can) 6-3, 1-6, 6-3; 19-Frances Tiafoe (USA) bt 12-Jakub Mensik (Cze) 7-6 (7/4), 4-6, 7-6 (13/11); 2-Jannik Sinner (Ita) bt 30-Corentin Moutet (Fra) 6-1, 6-4. **Women (4th rd):** 1-Aryna Sabalenka (Blr) bt 23- Zheng Qinwen (Chn) 6-3, 6-4; 3-Elena Rybakina (Kaz) bt Talia Gibson (Aus) 6-2, 6-2; 5-Jessica Pegula (USA) bt 34-Jaqueline Cristian (Rom) 6-4, 6-1; 12-Belinda Bencic (Sui) bt 6-Amanda Anisimova (USA) 6-2, 6-2; 4-Coco Gauff (USA) bt Sorana Cirstea (Rom) 6-4, 3-6, 6-2; 10-Victoria Mboko (Can) bt 8-Mirra Andreeva (RUS) 7-6 (7/4), 4-6, 6-0. AGENCIES

Andrews, Chettri in fray for coach's job

AIFF Says No To Valverde

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Panaji: The All India Football Federation (AIFF) demoted an Indian coach in the belief that a foreigner was better suited to guide the senior national team at the AFC Women's Asian Cup. After finishing the campaign without a point in Australia, the technical committee has now recommended a domestic coach.

FOOTBALL

Chaired by former India captain IM Vijayan, the technical committee has asked the federation not to offer a contract extension to **Amelia Valverde**, given the "disappointing performances" at the AFC Women's Asian Cup, where India lost all three group-stage games, including a heavy 11-0 drubbing at the hands of eventual champions Japan.

According to sources, the committee has recommended Anthony Andrews (East Bengal) and Crispin Chettri, former coach of the national team, for the top job.

"We expected more from Valverde," a member of the technical committee told TOI after its meeting on Tuesday. "She is an experienced coach and was brought in specifically to help India at the Asian Cup. But the performance was disappointing. India should have at least managed a draw."

The technical committee discussed how Valverde used three different formations for the group-stage games, without a positive result against Vietnam, and the decisive clash against Chinese Taipei. In fact, to make a point, the technical team referenced Manchester United where Ruben Amorim's rigid 3-4-2-1 was ditched by his successor Michael Carrick, paving the way for plenty of positivity and better results.

Even if Valverde had got the nod from the technical committee, it would have been difficult to convince the Costa Rican to continue without a pay hike. She was also in favour of a long-term contract, according to sources.

Valverde, who took Costa Rica twice to the FIFA World Cup, was appointed on a short-term two-month contract and allowed to bring in two foreign assistants of her choice for the continental showpiece where six World Cup spots were on offer.

With Valverde out of the equation, the technical committee has suggested the appointment of an Indian with Chettri, who was relegated to the assistant's role after Valverde's arrival, and East Bengal's Andrews the leading choices.

While Chettri ensured India's qualification to the Asian Cup with a famous win against hosts Thailand, Andrews has won multiple Indian Women's League (IWL) titles with Gokulam Kerala and East Bengal. He also oversaw the Kolkata giants' triumph at the inaugural SAFF Women's Club Championship last year. Both, however, do not have AFC Pro coaching license.

The coach will be initially in place for the FIFA Series in April, where India will face Asian Cup runners-up Australia, Malawi, and hosts Kenya, and later at the SAFF Championship in Goa.

"We have to seek clarity whether Pro license is a must for these two tournaments," said another official.

Bharti set to join national camp

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Panaji: The All India Football Federation (AIFF) has invited Academia del Balompie Boliviano defender **Abneet Bharti** to join the national team camp but it's unlikely that he will be considered for India's clash against Hong Kong later this month.

Bharti, 27, has been playing in the top tier of Bolivian football for the last two seasons. He was called for the senior national team camp for the away battle against Bangladesh last year but could not make it since his club had important games and travel to India would take up considerable time. Now, Bharti is on his way to Kochi where coach Khalid Jamil will have a closer look for the first time.

BOLIVIA TO INDIA

"Bharti is born in Nepal, and although he has an Indian passport, we will need FIFA clearance for him to be eligible to represent the national team," a senior AIFF official told TOI on Tuesday. "We have called him for the camp where Khalid will assess him and see if he fits into the squad."

Should he pass the test, Bharti will be an important addition to India's central defensive options where Anwar Ali and Sandesh Jhingan are top choices. Bharti grew up in two youth academies of Singapore, before moving to Spain at Real Valladolid. He has also played for Czech side, FK Varnsdorf, while his previous attempt to play in the top tier Indian Super League (ISL) with Kerala Blasters didn't come to fruition.

Meanwhile, Jamil's 23-member probables list includes Bengaluru FC's Ryan Williams, the Australian-born winger who obtained an Indian passport last year. Should he remain fit, he will make his national team debut against Hong Kong on March 31.

Williams' mother was born in an Anglo-Indian family in Mumbai. It will now be a true homecoming for the winger, given that his maternal grandfather, Lincoln Eric Grostate, was a footballer of repute, who played for Tatas and represented Bombay at the national football championship for Santosh Trophy in 1956.

"When I put on the India jersey, I'll give everything for the country, everything for the team, everything for the fans," Williams told TOI in a previous interview. "It would be quite difficult to put (that feeling) into words, but there's going to be joy. It will be quite emotional." India are out of the race to qualify for the AFC Asian Cup 2027.

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SUNJAY KAPUR'S WIFE PRIYA KAPUR ISSUES NOTICE FOR REMOVAL OF HER ESTRANGED MOM-IN-LAW RANI KAPUR FROM FAMILY TRUST

Aditya Birla and TOI Groups, Bolt & Blackstone buy RCB for $1.8bn

Deal Makes Bengaluru Team Most Expensive IPL Franchise Sold So Far

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Aditya Birla Group, The Times of India Group, Bolt Ventures, and Blackstone have signed a definitive agreement to acquire 100% of Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), current holders of both Indian Premier League and Women's Premier League titles, from United Spirits Ltd (USL), a subsidiary of Diageo Plc. The transaction has valued the franchise at US$1.78 billion (about Rs 16,600 crore).

▶ FULL COVERAGE: PAGES 2, 19 & 20

The acquisition is subject to customary closing conditions, including approval from BCCI, the IPL governing council, and other authorities.

Under the new ownership structure, which will come into place after IPL 2026, Aryaman Vikram Birla, director at Aditya Birla Group, will serve as RCB chairman while Satyan Gajwani of The Times of India Group will be vice-chairman. Birla played for Madhya Pradesh and was part of Rajasthan Royals squad.

In 2008, when BCCI floated IPL, United Spirits had submitted a winning bid of $111.6 million (approx Rs 485 crore) to acquire the franchise. In 2023, RCB paid Rs 901 crore to acquire the WPL team. In 2024, RCB won the WPL and followed it up with their first-ever IPL title win in 2025, becoming the first franchise to simultaneously hold both titles.

The deal makes RCB the most expensive IPL franchise sold so far. In 2013, after Virat Kohli took over as the team's captain, the franchise's popularity catapulted and it became one of the most popular and sought-after properties in the tournament.

Adar Poonawalla, Ranjan Pai of Manipal Hospitals, private equity firms EQT, TPG and Temasek, and the Glazer family, which owns Manchester United, were among other interested bidders.

▶Most popular brand in IPL, P 19

Aditya Birla Group chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla (L) and TIL chairman Satyan Gajwani

Consortium led by US-based Kal Somani picks up RR for $1.6bn

Mandakini.Shalya@timesofindia.com

Jaipur: The Rajasthan Royals franchise has been sold to a consortium led by US-based entrepreneur Kal Somani for $1.63 billion (about Rs 15,240 crore).

In 2008, when the Indian cricket board (BCCI) first sold franchises in Indian Premier League (IPL), a consortium of investors led by UK-based entrepreneur Manoj Badale had bought the Jaipur-based Rajasthan franchise for $67 million (about Rs 268 crore at 40/dollar). Almost 18 years later, the franchise has seen a 24-fold jump in valuation in dollar terms. In rupee terms, the valuation is up a whopping 57 times.

The consortium includes Rob Walton, heir to the Walmart fortune and owner of Denver Broncos, a team in the US professional football league, NFL. It is also backed by the Hamp family, led by Sheila Ford Hamp, owner of NFL's Detroit Lions and a senior member of the Ford Motor Company dynasty. Ownership will come into effect following the 2026 edition of IPL.

▶One of eight original teams, P 19

HDFC hiring law firms to probe exit of chairman

Mumbai: HDFC Bank has moved to appoint independent domestic and international law firms to examine the circumstances surrounding the resignation of its former part-time chairman Atanu Chakraborty, after his abrupt exit on March 18, 2026 citing differences over "values and ethics" triggered market unease and regulatory attention.

"Appointment of external law firms is a proactive measure taken by the bank to independently look at the aspects mentioned in the letter so as to ensure an objective & fact-based assessment. This step is keeping in view to constantly benchmark with the highest governance standards that the bank has practised over decades," a bank spokesperson said.

▶Board discussions, P 17

SC: SIR in many states, but Bengal alone has so many issues with it

Dhananjay.Mahapatra @timesofindia.com

New Delhi: The Supreme Court observed on Tuesday that while SIR has been conducted smoothly in other states, it is West Bengal that has generated a spate of litigation relating to electoral roll revision.

"There are many competitive complex issues in other states. Yet, SIR has been conducted so smoothly despite equally complicated issues. But there has not been any such spate of litigation. There are states — Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh — where the deletion rate is much higher," a bench of CJI Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi said.

▶Bengal a case apart, P 10

ED VS STATE

> If the CM barges into an ED investigation, your idea of remedy for ED is to go to the state govt, which is headed by the CM?
> —SC to CM's counsel Kapil Sibal

Court wrongly assuming the CM has committed the offence when the matter is still to be investigated —Sibal

Supplementary list: Voters in the dark

West Bengal's first supplementary electoral rolls published Monday midnight failed to provide clarity about the status of lakhs of voters under judicial adjudication. CEO admitted he had no answers yet. TNN

Charging extra for LPG delivery illegal: K'taka min

Bengaluru: Gas supply agencies cannot compel consumers to pay extra for doorstep delivery of LPG cylinders, Karnataka govt has clarified, urging the public to report incidents of overcharging.

State minister KH Muniyappa told the legislative council that oil firms have informed the state govt that the retail selling price of LPG includes delivery charge and that there is no provision to levy any additional fee for delivery.

The minister further clarified that if the department receives complaints regarding illegal collection of delivery charges, action will be initiated under the Marketing Discipline Guidelines 2022. Consumers can also call 18005991100 to lodge complaints. TNN

'Big lapse': Kerala CEO orders action

Kerala chief electoral officer Rathan U Kelkar acknowledged Tuesday that BJP's seal appearing on an EC letter was a "serious lapse" for which action had been initiated against the officer who handled the file. "The use of a political party's seal in an official EC communication is a grave oversight," Kelkar said. P 7

TOI HEALTH+
How a blood clot in one's leg can show up as sudden chest pain
GLP-1 drugs good for heart but can't replace statins
Does spraying perfume on neck affect thyroid gland?
+ much more, on P12

2025 civil service exams: OBCs pip EWS in final list despite interview drag

Subodh.Ghildiyal @timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Upending past pattern in the Civil Service Examinations (CSE), candidates of other backward classes (OBCs) trumped those from economically weaker sections (EWS) in the final merit list for 2025, despite trailing in the interview round.

The final 2025 cut-off (Mains + personality test/interview scores) for EWS is 926 while that for OBC is 931.

The cut-off in the Mains exams alone was 706 for EWS and 717 for OBCs. Cut-off marks are the minimum qualifying score for a social bloc availing of quota, and they vary across SC, ST, OBC, and EWS categories.

The 2025 final scores marked a reversal of the past trend when EWS had been finishing ahead of backward classes quota beneficiaries on the back of higher interview marks. That OBCs should this year not only trump EWS, but do so despite continuing weaker performance at the interview stage suggests an interesting development.

▶Written exam, P 8

QUOTA MATHS

- **EWS quota** introduced in civil services exam in **2019**, OBC quota since 1995
- In 2019 and 2020, **OBCs dominated Mains and final**
- In 2023 and 2024, **EWS trailed OBCs in Mains** but raced ahead in final score

Towing back in city as cops target illegal parking

Bengaluru: Motorists parking in no-parking zones risk their vehicles being towed away as authorities reintroduce operations after a 4-year gap, **reports Rajiv Kalkod.** Towing will be done by vehicles owned by Greater Bengaluru Authority and operated by its staff.

Fine for parking violation remains Rs 500. Additionally, two-wheelers are charged Rs 650 and four-wheelers Rs 1,000 by way of towing charges. Unlike the earlier system that relied on private 'Tiger' towing vehicles, the new system is being supervised by the police, with an ASI leading each operation.

Bengaluru traffic police maintain that illegal parking is a major contributor to congestion in the city.

▶In central, west, P 5

Govt cancels event on Deendayal at KSOU campus

Mysuru/Bengaluru: Karnataka govt has scrapped a three-day international conference at Karnataka State Open University in Mysuru, saying the objective of the private event is against the goals of the university and violates govt protocols, **reports Shrinivasa M.**

The conference, titled 'Ekatma Manav Darshan: Bharat's Worldview', was to be held at the KSOU convocation building in Muktagangotri Wednesday. It was meant to mark 60 years of lectures by Deendayal Upadhyaya, the leader of Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the forerunner of BJP.

▶No political activities, P 4

34% rural homes in K'taka don't have tap water: CAG

Niranjan.Kaggare @timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: Karnataka has failed to provide tap water connections to 24.5 lakh rural households — or 34% of the targeted 72.1 lakh — well past the March 2024 deadline under Jal Jeevan Mission, according to a Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) report tabled in the legislative assembly Tuesday.

The audit, covering 2019 to 2024 across 7 districts, flagged gaps in planning, execution, financial management and water quality monitoring, undermining the mission's goal of ensuring Har Ghar Jal. At the state level, irregular participation by departments affected convergence with schemes like Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) and Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana. Though some villages proposed convergence strategies, none were implemented.

▶'Poor planning', P 4

FUNDS NOT USED

- Five villages **wrongly declared 'Har Ghar Jal' compliant** and 21 shown as fully covered despite incomplete works
- Karnataka got only 45% of central outlay **due to underutilisation of funds**
- Spending on water quality monitoring **dropped from 50% in 2019-20 to 2%** in 2023-24

Pawar jet crash: Zero FIR in B'luru claims conspiracy

Bengaluru/Mumbai: Bengaluru police Monday night registered a zero FIR based on a complaint by Ajit Pawar's nephew and Karjat-Jamkhed MLA Rohit Pawar alleging a criminal conspiracy behind the Jan 28 aircraft crash in Baramati that claimed the life of the Maharashtra deputy CM, **report Rajiv Kalkod & Chaitanya Marpakwar.**

City police commissioner Seemanth Kumar Singh said: "On Monday, Ajit Pawar's nephew Rohit turned up at High Grounds police station and requested to register a zero FIR."

▶Rohit thanks K'taka, P 9

The Degree Of Crisis Is Worst In India

Jobless graduates are hardly unique to India. But the problem is at its most acute here, among economies of note. A recent dataset released by Azim Premji University, hit the point home. **TOI** compares unemployment rates among graduates across countries. Point to note: comparable data is not always available, for example, for US and China. But plenty of studies show China, too, is facing a crisis of jobless graduates. A paper by Jian Yu in the journal, Comparative Education, notes that unemployment rates in the 16-24 age group hit 18.9% in Aug 2025. That's still much better than India's, when put against the — roughly comparable — 20-25 age group, but it's still grim, by China's standards. In US, per data from its Labour Bureau and various Fed studies, unemployment among recent graduates (22-27 years) was between 5.3% and 5.8% in early 2026. For American commentators, this is bad news, since the rate has almost doubled. But, clearly, the US is far better off, compared to even EU. Interestingly, there are two classes in Europe, on jobless graduates, with Spain, Italy, Portugal, Greece, and even France, in the bottom half, and Germany and Netherlands doing much better. No one, to reemphasise, is doing as badly as India — where nearly two out of every five young graduates don't have a job.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES AMONG THOSE WHO ARE GRADUATE AND ABOVE (2024)

Country/ Region	20 to 24 years	25 to 29 years
European Union - 27 countries	12%	6.5%
Euro area - 21 countries	12	7
India	39	20
Türkiye	25	14
Greece	27	13
Spain	19.3	11.4
Italy	14.4	9.2
France	12.3	7.5
Portugal	18	7.4
Sweden	15.3	6.1
Germany	5.2	3.9
Netherlands	7.6	3.6

Source: European Commission, State of Working Report 2026, Azim Premji University

Why tech needs to be regulated before it rewires childhood

Arvind Sahay

The rapid diffusion of social media and artificial intelligence (AI) tools has transformed how humans learn, remember and make decisions. These technologies provide extraordinary access to information and cognitive assistance. But a growing body of research suggests that excessive reliance on them may alter patterns of thinking, attention and learning. Understanding this impact requires examining three connected ideas: what research says about the cognitive effects of digital technologies, how the brain develops through "exercise", and why the developmental stage of the brain — especially in youth — makes regulation a matter of public policy.

Research on heavy digital technology use has increasingly focused on attention, memory and critical thinking. The findings are nuanced. Technology can enhance learning when used deliberately, but excessive use appears to correlate with weaker engagement of higher-order thinking. Studies on social media use among children and adolescents suggest that heavy exposure is associated with declines in attention, working memory and executive functioning, particularly when usage becomes addictive or highly frequent. Excessive social media use has been linked with impaired attention and reduced working memory, even though some educational uses of these platforms can aid language learning and knowledge acquisition.

Research on AI use points to a related mechanism: cognitive offloading — the delegation of mental tasks such as memory, reasoning or problem-solving to external tools. Studies indicate that higher levels of AI tool use correlate with greater cognitive offloading and weaker critical-thinking scores. An MIT study conducted between April and July 2025 found a decline in cognitive abilities in the group using AI for defined tasks compared to an equivalent control group.

Broader reviews of digital technology use show two additional cognitive patterns. The first is digital amnesia: when devices become the default storehouse of memory, internal recall weakens. The second is attention fragmentation: algorithm-driven feeds and rapid content switching strain sustained attention and encourage shallow information processing. Taken together, these findings point to what some researchers call an "efficiency-atrophy paradox". Technology improves short-term performance and speed, but may also reduce opportunities for the brain to practice complex reasoning and memory formation.

Why does this happen? Because the brain develops through neuroplasticity: neural circuits strengthen when they are repeatedly activated. Learning occurs when neurons that "fire together" form stronger synaptic connections. Activities that demand sustained attention, reasoning and problem-solving stimulate these networks and strengthen them over time. The brain's prefrontal cortex, located behind the forehead, plays a central role in executive functions — planning, decision-making, impulse control and goal-directed behaviour. These abilities are essential for judgment, leadership and long-term thinking. Yet this region reaches full maturity only around ages 21 to 25, making it the last major part of the brain to fully develop.

During adolescence and early adulthood, neural networks responsible for executive control are still forming. Studies of youth brain development show that structural brain networks gradually reorganise during this period, enabling improvements in working memory, cognitive flexibility and decision-making. Cognitive abilities are therefore shaped significantly by the activities the brain repeatedly performs during these years. Just as muscles strengthen through physical exercise, cognitive networks strengthen through demanding mental activity — reading deeply, solving problems, debating and practising complex reasoning.

The reverse is also true. When cognitive tasks are consistently delegated to external systems, the brain gets fewer opportunities to exercise these circuits. Social media platforms and AI systems often reduce the need for sustained mental effort. Algorithms curate information streams, while AI tools can summarise text, generate arguments, solve problems and produce writing. These tools undoubtedly enhance productivity, but excessive reliance can reduce how often individuals engage in cognitively demanding tasks. Research shows that when AI performs analytical work, users may engage less in independent reasoning and evaluation. This is particularly concerning in education, where young users may outsource summarising readings, writing essays or solving problems to AI systems. When cognitive effort declines, learning risks becoming superficial.

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For developing brains, the risk is greater. Adolescents are often more sensitive to rewards and novelty because brain systems related to emotion and reward develop earlier than the executive control systems of the prefrontal cortex. Since executive functions mature only into the mid-twenties, young people may be especially vulnerable to technologies designed to maximise engagement. Heavy exposure to algorithmic feeds and instant answers can therefore produce a pattern in which attention becomes fragmented, deep learning declines, and cognitive skills such as memory, reasoning and sustained focus receive less practice. In effect, the brain's "exercise regimen" changes. Instead of training reflection and sustained reasoning, it increasingly trains rapid navigation, scanning and reaction.

This has implications not just for families, but for societies and nations. Govts are beginning to experiment with regulatory guardrails around social media and digital technologies. One of the most notable examples is Australia's Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024, which bars children under 16 from holding accounts on major social media platforms. The law requires companies to prevent under-age accounts, with significant penalties for non-compliance.

The policy reflects growing concern that unrestricted social media exposure contributes to digital addiction and mental-health risks among adolescents. Other jurisdictions are exploring similar approaches. In India, Karnataka has announced plans to ban social media use for children under 16, positioning itself among the first regions in the country to move in this direction. European countries, including Sweden, have also debated stricter rules around children's screen time and digital access, reflecting a broader recognition that digital environments may require safeguards similar to those applied to other public-health risks.

These policy initiatives generally pursue three objectives: protecting developing brains during the years when executive functions are still forming; reducing addictive platform design, including infinite scroll and algorithmic engagement loops; and encouraging balanced technology use that complements rather than replaces human cognition. Regulation, in other words, need not aim to eliminate technology. It is about shaping the conditions under which it is used, especially for the young.

So what should India do? If excessive reliance on social media and AI can alter attention, memory and critical thinking through cognitive offloading and attention fragmentation, better regulation is needed. The central insight from neuroscience is simple: the brain develops through use. Cognitive abilities strengthen when exercised and weaken when routinely delegated to external systems. Because the executive-control centres of the brain mature only in the early to mid-twenties, the effects of these technologies may be especially consequential for young people.

This emerging scientific understanding helps explain why policymakers are beginning to introduce guardrails around digital technologies — from age-based social media restrictions in Australia to proposals in Karnataka. As societies adapt to the AI age, the challenge will be to harness the immense benefits of these technologies while ensuring that human cognition continues to develop and flourish.

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The writer is director and professor of marketing and international business, MDI Gurgaon

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